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BOOK 6: New Dreams ch220-? START

1 Chapter 220a - Strengthening a Thread Chapter 220a - Strengthening a Thread - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG (Book 4 Stubs 8/29!) | Royal Road

Chapter 220a - Strengthening a Thread

Wekime's presence upset the five watchers as they turned to face him.
A smile was on his jaw as he saw them take the same shape as he was right now. A dragonkin, as some might call it, one that allowed him easy access through the halls of this place without having to show off the immense size of his natural form.
Oh, what I wouldn't give to shed this shell and watch as they transformed also...
Chuckling slightly, his eyes watched the blank looks on the watchers as they shifted ever so slightly.
"It has been a while since you have visited us," one of the female watchers said. "Tell us, are you here to break the agreement?"
Shaking his head slowly, Wekime stood there with his hands behind his back, slowly flexing his fingers as he continued to consider what they must be thinking and wondering.
"I have not."
For creatures of immense power, almost as old as he was and gatekeepers to the system and all that controls it, they seemed relieved at his reply.
How many years has it been since I have been here? Forty thousand? Fifty thousand?
Lost in his thoughts for a moment, Wekime allowed himself to reflect on how that had gone. A rift in the peace had been broken, and the movement of the others had resulted in something scorching planets and killing hundreds of gods.
The last time all three skills fought.
"I won't waste time or words. I have come to invest power in the threads of one."
"One moment," the same watcher replied, and he watched as all five went silent, knowing they were communicating in secret.
Worlds, solar systems, galaxies, and more flew by across the landscape of this room's ceiling. He recognized so many of them, having been there when they were formed. Watching and not getting to play the game had left him bored. Occasionally, all he could do was wait for those who asked for his wisdom or guidance.
Being a god and bored is a dangerous thing. That is why the demons moved as they did. Rumors of their mischief have been going on for so long across all the worlds.
"Tell us the name of the one you want to adjust the thread on."
The male watcher's voice was one he knew too well. Focusing his gaze upon the dragonkin at the end, they locked eyes, and those bright white eyes shined back at him.
"Max Hoste."
As one of the five shifted, his smile grew as they glanced at each other momentarily. The black stone chairs they chose to sit in reminded him of a material he had created. Each time he came, they had used it for their chairs, and at first, it felt like a slight, telling him that it was nothing more than a place for their celestial ass to sit upon.

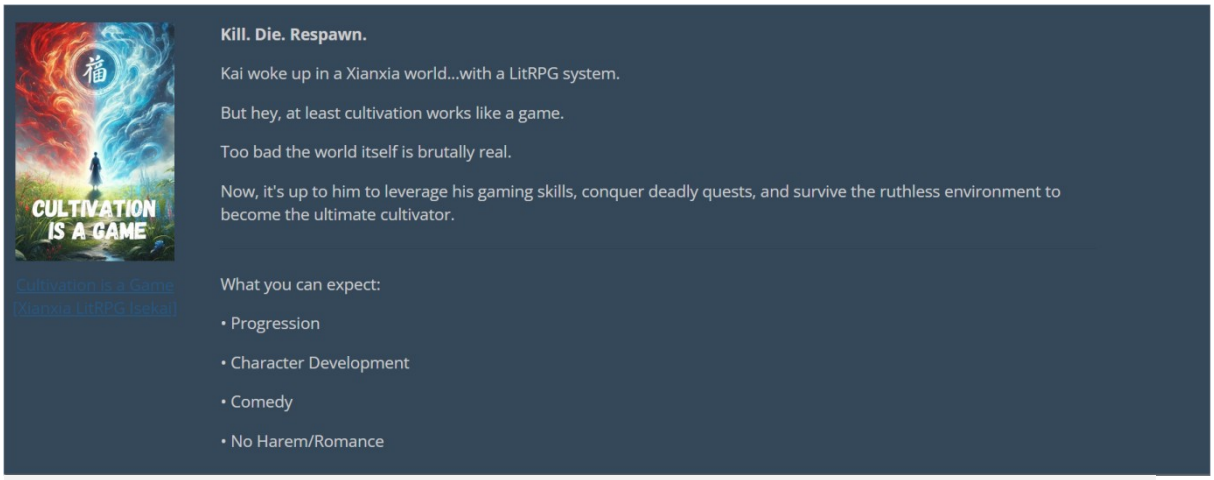
In time, he saw it as a compliment. That they would choose to show his creation in this room was a testament to his power.
“That name is not one you should know. How have you come about it?”
The sound of his laughter echoed around a room with no walls. Every star, planet, and the vastness of the heavens surrounded him, yet his voice filled it all.
“One does not rise to my power and position without having ways of finding fun things to play with. Now tell me, I am still allowed to impart power back into the system, am I not?”
“You are.”
The short reply told Wekime everything he needed to know. For those who were supposed never to give away things, his simple act and their response confirmed that many were attempting to find the young man or already impart power to his thread. Even the fact that simply saying a name that could be known multiple times in so many different worlds and getting that response meant the watchers were focused on this life.
Someone had originally decided to give him this power, for whatever reason. Whether it had been specific or simply a random act, the thread of this young boy's life was undoubtedly now weaving itself through so many things that it would be unable to hide in time.
“Then I would like to impart some blessings upon his journey.”
Silence seemed to stretch on for eternity as the five said nothing. If it wasn’t for the threads of power that ran from the cosmos and into them and back out, he might have thought time itself had frozen.
“Very well. Choose how much you wish to give to help this one.”
Nodding, Wekime moved to the metallic pillar that rose from the floor and set his three-fingered scaled hand upon it.
Oh, Phiaus... using your own gift to help this boy seems like the greatest irony of it all.
As the planet's power left him and the watchers felt it enter the system, Wekime sensed the boy briefly on a young world.
“The price has been paid. How would you like his thread to be adjusted?”
“Increase his chance of acquiring better items. Maybe even an artifact.”
The female watcher who spoke first leaned forward slightly. A single finger pointed at him, and her tone sounded shocked as she spoke.
“You would ask for one of those to be given? You have not paid near enough for such a prize!”
Waving his hand, the metallic pillar rose again, and he put his hand upon it once more.
“Then tell me the cost. As you all know, there is no limit to what I can pay.”

2 Chapter 220 - The 19th Floor Boss

Chapter 220 - The 19th Floor Boss - Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG (Book 4 Stubs 8/29!) | Royal Road

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

HTTPS://WWW.ROYALROAD.COM/FICTION/89859/CULTIVATION-IS-A-GAME-XIANXIA-LITRPG-ISEKAI


Kill. Die. Respawn.
Kai woke up in a Xianxia world...with a LitRPG system.
But hey, at least cultivation works like a game.
Too bad the world itself is brutally real.
Now, it's up to him to leverage his gaming skills, conquer deadly quests, and survive the ruthless environment to become the ultimate cultivator.
CULTIVATION IS A GAME
Cultivation is a Game [Xianxia LitRPG Isekai]
What you can expect:
• Progression
• Character Development
• Comedy
• No Harem/Romance

Chapter 220 - The 19th Floor Boss

[Status Check]
*****
Max Hoste
18-Year-old Human Male
Level 1
Exp 101/1000
Tower Experience: 20.00%
HP: 3810/3810
MP: 2250/2250
Stamina: 1905/1905
STR: 374
DEX: 315
CON: 381
INT: 225
WIS: 225
Defense of the Dragon - 9.0%
Defense of the Demon - 9.0%
Demon Essence: - 305
Boots of Strength - 10 STR
Black Quick Pants - 2 STR/DEX +10% Movement Bonus
Sand Worm’s Skin Chest - 10 STR/CON + 10% Magic Resist +20% Crushing Damage
Black Bracers - 3 STR/CON +15% Damage decrease slashing/piercing
Belt of the Golem - 4 STR/CON +25% Damage decrease slashing/piercing
Scout Spider Helm - 5 STR/CON/DEX. Invisible State, Grants Minor Poison Resist
Cloak of Spider - 5 Dex. Spider Walk - 5 mins / 24 hour cooldown
Green Ring - 1 DEX
Black Rabbit Ring - 2 DEX
Ring of the Golem Prince - 4 CON +25% magic resist
Ring of Growth - 10% Stat Increase
Black Boss Band - 20% Stat Increase
Bracelet of Sand Worm - 10 STR/CON Minor Acid Resist
Conqueror of the Broken Prince -
40 STR/DEX/CON +30% Damage Larger Enemies, Cleaving
Gorgon Scaled Shield - 20 STR/DEX/CON Impervious / Indestructible
*****
Floors fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen hadn’t yielded a single item. However after a fruitless eighteenth tower floor, Max couldn’t help but look at his stats in awe. Everything had been going about as smoothly as possible and all they had left to finish tomorrow was the boss on the nineteenth floor of the tower.

“What are you doing that has you so focused?”
Tanila’s voice drew him from his thoughts and the page in his journal he was staring at. He glanced up from the page, completely decked out in all his gear, and grinned. Shrugging, he immediately swapped out his tower climbing gear for a simple shirt and pair of pants.
Picking up his pencil, Max jotted down a number and tapped his finger against the page.
“Honestly, I’ve realized why things have been so easy the last few days. According to my notes, the stats for the creatures through tower level eighteen don't go higher than two hundred and fifteen if my math is right. Knowing that and where my stats are, along with us having ground out the tower level so we are ready for the next gems after tomorrow, we are sitting at a twenty percent bonus to stats.”
Shifting in her chair, Tanila nodded, closing and storing her book.
“And that is why you have been cutting through everything without a problem.”
“Not just me, but you all as well,” Max replied. “Each of you has thirty percent to your stats right now. With you all having hit level sixty-two for your normal levels and adding the weapons I’ve made, everyone has been tearing through those last three levels.”
“But…”
Chuckling, Max nodded as he moved to the chair next to her after storing his journal and sat down.
“I’ve missed out on three tower floors for stats. These undead have been nothing but experience for you all, plus the green gems they drop. Which makes me wonder what the twentieth level is going to be like. How many stats are waiting to be gained once we start grinding through the monsters there?”
Sighing, Tanila shook her head as she smiled at him.
“I’m glad to see you’re not excited about tomorrow. Even if we know the boss is going to be undead.”
“It is what it is. What I’m more interested in right now is how long it’s going to take me to get you from that chair to the bed.”
Winking as he stood up, Max could only smile when Tanila jumped out of her chair and raced toward the bed.
“Glad to see I still have a way with words,” Max joked as he ran to join her.
***
Fowl’s hammer smashed another undead spider into the black dirt of the tower floor. Green and foul-smelling goo came from its flattened carapace.
Max spun like a top, cleaving through another six that all got close, attacking the closest person in their way.
Before the fight had even really started, fifteen undead corpses were no longer attacking, some twitching while others burned.
“This is just a grind fest,” Fowl said. “No tactics at all. Don’t get me wrong, it's nice not having to worry about fighting anything with a brain.”
“It’s like shadowboxing?”
Fowl looked at Cordellia and stood there a moment while the rest laughed, realizing he hadn’t gotten the joke yet.
“We’re still like an hour from that purple beacon up ahead,” Tanila said.
Everyone saw the light that rose from the ground into the dark night sky. Stars were twinkling, yet the moon was absent on the tower floor, and if it hadn’t been for their rings, seeing anything would have been hard without using a light.
The ground was littered with graves and tombstones, some of them now empty, where spiders, zombies, or even the occasional undead creature had emerged after digging themselves free.
Yet across the darkness, a purple line of power ran from the ground into the night sky, vanishing into nothingness, drawing them toward what they assumed was the floor boss.
***
“What in the gods is that?”

Fowl’s question left each of them wondering the same thing as they saw the boss slowly moving around the purple cube that radiated a glowing light everywhere for about one hundred yards.
Nightvision rings weren’t needed as the cube's light was bright enough to see by.
A twenty-foot creature resembling a bear, with its skin appearing to have been ripped off and sewn back together with an assortment of other kinds of flesh. Giant seams and stitches ran along the creature and it gave off a horrible scent that they smelled even a hundred yards away.
“Look at those massive bumps of flesh,” Cordellia said as she studied the pockets of flesh raised in different spots. “I’m glad I don’t have to fight that thing up close and worry about hitting something that might explode.”
Groaning, Foul’s head bobbed as he saw what she had pointed out.
“We can go in hard and fast and see what happens. I mean, if we unleash everything big at the start, we might be able to kill it without a problem.” Max stated as he pointed at the cube the boss was to the right of as it circled it again slowly. “It would be even better if we could kill the boss and find out what that is. Perhaps Everett or the faction could use it.”
“I’m not certain,” their ranger replied. “I haven’t ever seen or heard of anything like that, but then again, no one has ever really reported seeing half the crap we do.”
A few chuckles came before everyone put on their serious face.
“So you want me to charge it, and then you come up from behind and go ham on it?”
Max nodded at Fowl and checked that everyone else was ready.
“Feel free to use any spells or abilities you want,” Max said, flashing a grin at Tanila and Cordellia.
Fowl started jogging toward the massive bear and when he was about fifty yards away, the giant beast turned and roared.
Green ooze came from its mouth, splattering against the black dirt as the boss started racing toward Fowl.
Holding his shield ready, Fowl stood behind it, planting his feet.
As the boss got close, it swung a massive paw at Fowl.
Just before it connected, the clawed strike flashed red and slammed against their warrior, and one-half of Fowl’s hit points were gone.
A howl of pain came as green liquid squirted from all over the boss’s right arm that had struck it, chunks of flesh falling off from the aura that had inflicted damage back at the beast.
Max came in from the side, ready to end this as he summoned a wall of stone, making it angled like a ramp, and ran up to the side of the boss.
[Power Strike]
[Magical Strike]
[Rampage]
His axe sliced through everything, a wave of magic coming off the weapon as the cleave effect added itself to the power of his attack.
Combined with the bonus damage against a larger creature, the first attack created a six-foot opening in its side. The second one hacked off another two feet and, with the third swing of Max’s weapon cutting through the same spot, the beast fell to the ground, gore spilling out everywhere as its body was cut two-thirds the way through.
A fireball exploded against the boss’s head as Tanila got her licks in on the creature, joining the Empowered shot from Cordellia.
One moment, the boss had been standing, and the next, it was on the ground, burnt to a crisp on the front half, a massive hole in its skull from an arrow and its body split in two.
Snorting, Max jumped back off his ramp and turned toward the others. He saw that Batrire had healed Fowl, and his friend was standing up, albeit a little slower.
“That went well,” Max said, grinning until he saw Tanila’s face.
“It’s not dead!”
His sonar told him she was right as the boss’s body began to shake and flex.

The large pockets of whatever was on its skin began to quiver, and Max felt a buildup of something magical coming from the body near him.
“Run!”
The purple cube began to glow bright, and the light shining into the sky stopped.
Now the square pulsed, sending out waves of purple light so bright it felt like one was looking at the sun.
Max could sense the body of the boss reacting in some way.
About six seconds after the light in the cube was condensed, it shot a solid beam of purple into the corpse, causing it to explode. Chunks of flesh, green ooze, and white liquid went everywhere for a hundred yards.
Tanila summoned an air shield over her and the others while Max put one above Fowl, unsure what was raining down on them.
Burning pain came as liquid fell like a rain cloud upon him, going through his armor and to his skin.
“It’s acid, I think!” Max shouted as he felt the sensation and how it hurt, but the resistance from his bracelet nullified most of the damage.
Turning toward the spot where the boss had been, the purple light pulsed again, locked in on the skull, the only thing that remained from the massive body that had once been there.
It began to pulse, turning purple, and seemed to give off the same color as it was bathed in the energy that washed over it.
“Seth?!”
Without any idea of what was coming, Max started summoning a fireball.
“Hit it with your spells!”
Slowly bones began to grow from the skull, each of them spiked and covered in a purple aura that looked like flames.
From the head a spine appeared, followed by a rib cage and then thick bone arms.
His fireball and Tanila’s blasted the bones, washing over them and doing no apparent damage.
An arrow flew through his sonar range, and Max watched as it struck the purple cube.
A loud whine began to fill the air, and arrow after arrow flew past him, impacting the side of the cube.
The skull turned towards their ranger and let out a shriek, giant teeth forming as it attempted to move on the limbs that were beginning to form.
Max didn’t wait, pulling out his bow and sending a barrage of arrows at the cube.
“Using my special one!”
The arrow of slaying flew past him, impacting the side of the cube. A giant crack appeared, sending light spilling out everywhere.
The ground began to shake, and the bones that had begun to form started falling from the skeleton that had been summoned.
“RUN!” Max shouted as he saw the purple light start to cascade in waves around them, his flesh beginning to burn from the pain as it washed over him.
[Regeneration]
Fowl was moving, his short legs almost looking comical with how fast they moved, sending up small clouds of black dirt behind him.
Tanila, Batrire, and Cordellia were all moving as a pack, staying close as they ran, trying to escape the light pulsing across the ground.
Max heard the noise of the cube, the whine of something going wrong, and felt the buildup of power coming toward him.
Yanking his shield out, he hid behind it, wondering what this would feel like in a moment.
[Armored Warrior]
[Bulwark]
A second passed as he hunkered down, and then a loud explosion rocked the area, sending a wave of dirt and magical energy flying in a circle from the cube.
Pain erupted from the areas of his body that were not hidden behind his shield, flesh melting and regenerating as the magic connected.

He cast stone a stone wall in the other three's path, hoping it would help.
Tanila did the same before the wave of purple light washed over and around the three as Batrire used her protective dome.
It took a few seconds for his eardrums to repair themselves, but Max saw and heard that everyone was alive.
Fowl had also used his defensive skills, mimicking his attempt at hiding behind his shield.
“Everyone ok?”
Groans and yes came from the trio while Fowl limped toward Max, missing about a third of his hit points from that attack.
“What in the gods was that?” Fowl asked as he stared at the crater the explosion had caused.
The black ground was littered with purple glowing specs that cast a light for a hundred yards in a circle.
Grunting, Max shrugged and checked his shield, seeing that no damage had been done to it from the attack.
“No clue, but I wouldn’t want to have been closer when that blew up.”
Snorting, Fowl nodded and pointed at the purple-glowing chest in the center of the crater.
“Well, at least we appear to get some loot finally.”
Nodding, Max felt the other three coming close and gave his friend a gentle pat on his armor.
“The good news is you didn’t die. So I guess you can open it up.”
Fowl grinned as he stored his shield and began moving toward the chest.
“I’ll never argue with you on something like that. Now let’s go see what we acquired.”

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Okay it's Monday and I haven't done near enough updates (blame the wife, six kids, etc).

2 pieces of GOOD news.

First - Book 5 just started!

Second - DRAGON CON is THIS WEEK!

I'll be there all week and wanted to give some information:

First - chapters are loaded - no worries (i mean like... I got chapters for days).

Second - I'll be posting stuff on my Facebook page and TikTok as much as possible to help you find me.

Third - I do this because - i got prizes for those lucky to find me at certain times ;)

Four - Uh... no clue... just know I'll be there.

TikTok - @numbersgoup
Facebook - https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61550944093152

That's it - enjoy the weekend

3 Chapter 221 - Breaking Down Stats https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-4-stubs-829/chapter/1776503/chapter-221-breaking-down-stats

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

HTTPS://WWW.ROYALROAD.COM/FICTION/90960/THE-TOWER-STRIVE-A-PROGRESSION-FANTASY

Chapter 221 - Breaking Down Stats

The chest was made from some sort of purple colored stone and had a small cube with a line coming from it toward the boss they had just faced engraved on its side. Runes etched into and around the chest didn't look like any that Max recognized, and no one commented on them as Fowl lifted the lid.

"Damn, that's some seriously ugly stuff!" their warrior exclaimed.

Each of them looked into the swirling vortex and saw that inside were a pair of purple chain bracers for Max, a pair of purple plate boots, two purple armbands, and purple leather pants. Two rings were waiting to be rolled on, and two large green crystals seemed out of place in a sea of purple.

Max saw Cordellia wince as she stared at the pants.

"Those are pretty ugly," Tanila said as she reached in, taking her armband from the chest. "But Seth doesn't–"

She stopped talking, and her eyes went wide as she held the metallic purple band in her hand.

"That good?"

Their mage nodded as she quickly slid it on her arm and Batrire didn't hesitate, reaching in and taking hers out.

"Damn… that's just impossible."

"Stop beating around the bush and tell me the stats," Fowl complained as he grabbed the plate boots waiting for him.

"Twenty-five intelligence and wisdom," Tanila replied.

Batrire's head bobbed as she removed her old armband and replaced it with the new one.

"Fowl?"

Max watched their dwarven warrior, who had been holding the plate boots in his hand, as they replaced his older ones.

"Same except for twenty-five in strength and constitution."

Cordellia and Max took out theirs, each grinning as they saw the stats.

[*Inspect Bracer*]

*****

Cubed Bracer

+ 25 Strength, Dexterity, Constitution

Bonded

*****

"Wow, that's really nice," their ranger stated as she used her new storage item and swapped out her pants instantly.

"What about the two rings?" Fowl asked, a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

"You four roll on them," Max said as he retrieved the two gems. "I got the last big item."

Each of them smiled, touching the first ring, and soon Batrire walked away with one while Cordellia came away with the second.
Sighing, Fowl smiled and clapped his hands.
“The good news is I’m getting something soon!”
Batrire and Cordellia were grinning after finding out their rings added twenty to three stats.
“Not bad for boss loot. All that is left is heading back to the Faction house and waiting for our skills to come off cooldown.”
Max nodded at Tanila, and the group made their way to the portal, excited about taking a shot at the twentieth floor soon.
***
Standing outside the portal, Max felt an eerie presence nearby and glanced around, using his sonar to try and see if something was hidden.
The two guards on duty seemed unaware of anything, and even after taking a moment while the rest of the group started walking off, Max found himself frowning, sensing something had changed.
“You coming?”
Nodding, he tried to smile at Tanila, who frowned, seeing the look on his face.
“Everything ok?” she whispered as he moved beside her and grabbed her hand.
“I’m not sure, but I’ll tell you in the carriage once we activate the runes.”
***
Once everyone was seated, they all turned and noticed that Max was frowning, indicating he was upset about something.
“Ok, what’s wrong?” Fowl asked.
Sighing, Max shrugged as he shook his head, rubbing his bald head for a moment.
When we came out of the tower, I felt something weird… like someone or something was watching us or maybe nearby. Almost like that time in the demon dungeon.”
Everyone grimaced and started looking at each other slowly.
“Yet no alarms went off in the city, and the guards didn’t seem to react,” Batrire said.
“If there were something like that, surely the wards the capital has in place would have reacted.”
Nodding, Max could only shrug.
“I know… it’s just weird. It’s gone now and was only there for a few seconds. Still, after having been shot at, poisoned, and attacked a few times, I wasn’t sure what might happen.”
“Perhaps the gods have found you and were about to strike you–”
An elbow from Batrire cut Fowl off, causing him to yelp.
“It’s ok,” Max said. “That's why we’re doing this. To be strong enough to protect everyone we love. With that said, I want to ask something, and I know it’s very private, so if you don’t want to tell me, I’ll understand.”
Fowl’s eyebrow raised as he rubbed his arm.
“Only a few things would ever require that kind of warning and I’m pretty sure I know what you’re going to ask.”
“Our stats?”
Max nodded at Cordellia who was biting her lip.
“I’m tracking the monsters and based on what I know about the armor and weapons each of you have, I can come up with some ideas. That also means you don’t have to tell me the actual stat you’re sitting at after all bonuses.“
“If you already think you know, why ask?” their warrior asked.
Looking at Fowl, Max grinned and pulled out a notebook. Flipping through a few pages, he smiled as he fingered the paper.
“So based on how you always struggle with simple things and can’t resist the intimidation effects, you probably have a twenty or so in intelligence and wisdom. Am I right?”
Fowl held up his middle finger at Max, causing everyone to laugh.
“That’s a yes, I take it. This means out of the two hundred and ninety-six stat points you have, basically, you have two hundred and fifty-five left over. Knowing your

strength and dex is less than a fifty by how you move and what you lift when not wearing your gear or carrying the new hammer means most of your points are in constitution. That puts you around one hundred and sixty for that stat."
Fowl's eyes widened as Max spoke, causing his human friend to grin as he continued.
"Based on that knowledge, plus your tower experience and the items you have, you're getting close to a three hundred strength and are over a four hundred in constitution. Sadly, your intelligence is still probably thirty at best."
Batrire coughed as Fowl shook his head slowly.
"How… how can you know all that?" he asked.
"I can do the same for all of you, knowing what skills you have as well as how most classes spend their stat points. This gives me a good point of reference on how strong we are when facing each tower floor," Max replied. "Batrire and Cordellia getting those rings is actually really good for both of them, helping to shore up the weak constitution and providing extra stats in the areas they need them."
Max pulled out a slip of paper he had folded up between some pages and turned it around.
"As you can see, I have the items listed that probably need to be replaced sooner rather than later on for each of you."
Turning toward Cordellia, Max gave her a toothy grin.
"Since joining us, I have kept track of everything you have acquired. Based on the knowledge of how weak most of the other items you had were compared to what drops for us, as you can see, the list of items you need to replace is longer than the others."
Grimacing, their ranger saw everyone smiling at her.
"Now you make me feel like I'm the weakest one here," she said.
Shaking his head, Max continued to smile at her.
"No! You're doing amazing! The stats you have now are far greater than when you first started with us and the damage you did against the boss with the new arrow was incredible! Had you used that with your empowered shot, I honestly am not sure if there would have been much of a skull left for that cube to affect."
"He's right," Tanila chimed in. "You've been carrying your weight and then some, especially with all the improvements Tom has helped with your shot placements."
Relief appeared on Cordellia's face and she smiled at them.
"Well as long as I'm not slacking like Fowl, I'll be ok."
A stubby middle finger danced before her face and the cart filled with laughter, everyone apparently having forgotten about the concern Max felt just a little bit ago.
***
"Seems you're making a name for yourself faster than you might have imagined," Everett said as he watched Max crafting two hammers for the Faction members.
"Since I started handing out weapons, the line of members wanting to get one has grown quickly. Word has even spread through the city and we have been receiving more applications than usual."
"And I'm sure it has nothing to do with two lost members returning either," Max replied, his eyes never leaving the engraving he was doing at that moment.
Grunting, Everett's fingers started to tap against the stone work table.
"That has caused a bit of a fuss for certain amongst the other Factions and even into the nobles themselves. The elves and dwarves have reached out and our smaller outpost house in those capitals has received a few letters that have been forwarded to me. Each faction has created a list of members they know were lost to a gorgon or other beasts and rewards are being offered to any person or Faction that might be able to rescue them."
Max quickly stored the eight inch hammer head so that it wouldn't suffer from him stopping what he was doing.
"You're serious? Factions are actually offering rewards for doing the right thing?"
Chuckling, Everett nodded.

“Unlike you, most people are motivated by money and power. A glimmer of hope has been spread and it is expanding quickly across all the Factions. I even received a letter from an elvish noble.”
A few seconds later, Everett held out a folded piece of paper to Max.
Taking it from the older man, he felt the quality of the material and could see the wax seal was very ornate. Opening it, Max started scanning the words and his eyes froze upon two lines.
“They are offering thirty thousand gold! For one person?!”
His voice echoed in the room and looking up from the paper he saw that Everett was nodding slowly.
“Their daughter was lost to a boss and turned to stone. She was in a party facing a gorgon on the forty fifth floor when everyone but one person perished. This was well over a hundred years ago and from the information I found out, the one that survived didn’t enjoy the torture they went through as the family verified his story.”
Frowning, Max folded the letter up and handed it back.
“We can’t face the same boss again though. So I’m guessing their hope is that another group might face the one that killed their daughter?”
Rubbing his eyes, Everett finally let out a sigh.
“The idea that some bosses are able to stay alive multiple times has been discussed and debated for a thousand years. One of the worst problems comes when one reaches the forty fifth and forty ninth floor in the tower. The bosses there are typically some of the worst. Many parties have entered the tower floor and left, having heard stories and rumors about how bad things have gone.
“When you finally reach those floors, I’ll give you another escape gem that way two of you will have one. That will provide your party and you a better chance of surviving if things go wrong.”
It was Max’s turn for his fingers to drum against the table as he leaned on it slightly.
“Well, we are still twenty floors away before that becomes an issue but I guess we’ll have to wait and see. My real question comes down to what we might face before then. If we’re hitting bosses that are ten or twenty levels higher than usual, what can that mean for the actual foes we face on floor number forty-four?”
Smacking his tongue a few times against his teeth, their Faction leader shrugged.
“Honestly, I have no idea. Everything I thought I knew has been warped because of you and your team. Even Tom is struggling to continue to find ways to train all of you. The level of your expertise is impossible to comprehend.”
“What about my request for a skill upgrade?”
“You were serious about that?”
Max nodded and saw the pained expression on Everett’s face.
“I know that I’m asking for the impossible, but if we can give Tanila a godly skill, it will make our end goal even better.”
Sighing, Everett slowly nodded his head.
“I’ll ask the board but I’ll be honest, getting them to agree to that before your party reaches the fiftieth floor would be almost impossible.”
Nodding, Max shrugged and picked up the engraving tool, retrieving the hammer head from his storage and began engraving right where he left off.
“Better to start asking now so they are prepared when we reach it.”
Everett scoffed but nodded.
“And who knows how soon that might happen.”

4 Chapter 222 - Dungeon Break

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-4-stubs-829/chapter/1777829/chapter-222-dungeon-break

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Care for a LitRPG following a goddess in pursuit of Followers? Then check out Goddess Reborn! Books 1-3 of The Mirror World Progression Saga on Amazon, Amazon KU, or as Audible audiobooks!

Chapter 222 - Dungeon Break

“We need to hurry!”
Max was shouting at the rest of the team as the faction house looked like an ant hill with people scurrying everywhere.
“Which gate?” Fowl shouted as he ran down through the dining hall they had been eating in.
“South gate! We’ve got a portal stone down below, but we need to hurry!”
Tom was ushering the members who were around to the lower level of the Faction house toward the room that would send everyone who could go to the south gate.
“What kind are they?” Batrire asked as they ran past their trainer.
“Manticores! They cap at level forty, but with this break, rumor has them being closer to forty-five or fifty in some spots!”
Curses came as they ran through the stone hallway and found themselves packed into a room with two other groups, both newer ones that had joined in the last few weeks.
“That’s everyone!” Tom yelled from down the hall. “Send them!”
Max looked at Everett and Alfreda, the older woman who managed all the Faction’s crafting materials. They stood near a tiny gem that looked like the one back in the adventurer hall.
This room was a square room about fifteen feet wide and might hold two more parties before it was completely full. The same crystal ran along the wall, and one wall had a small indentation where the older two Faction members were standing, outside of the crystal square on the floor.
“Be safe! Use those poison potions and don’t die!” Alfreda shouted as Everett put both hands on a small crystal jutting from the wall near him.
The gem in the center of the room pulsed, and a bright light flashed.
“I’m going to be sick,” one of the dwarves from another party said before losing the food he had just been eating upstairs.
The sun was about two hours from setting, casting shadows and creating problems for the local citizens who were fleeing toward the safety of the gates. Shouting and yelling was coming from the line of people fleeing with their possessions, trying to reach the safety of the walls.
“Adventurers!”
Max and the rest turned, seeing a pair of guards who were standing near the spot they had appeared at.
“To the south! There are some smaller groups of adventurers who have already ran out there but news is bad,” a female guard shouted as they moved toward her. “Most of the groups that arrived first are out there, but the monsters are above what they should be!”
“Any other factions yet?” Tanila asked as Batrire cast her buff.
“Not yet! You’re here a lot quicker than we expected!”
The two newer groups from their faction looked at them, waiting to hear what they were going to command.
“You two, stay close to each other, work this main road. Ensure the people get here safely. We’ll race ahead and work on clearing a path to the dungeon and defeat the boss!”
All of them nodded and began casting buffs before quickly running in the direction everyone was fleeing from.
“We don’t got time for this and I would rather not use my ability if I don’t have too. So forgive me,” Max said as he motioned at Tanila and Batrire.
“You’re seriously going to carry us?” their healer asked.
“And Fowl. We don’t have time. Only Cordellia can keep up and we need to go.”

A sigh came from their warrior who held his arms out sideways.
“Let’s get it over with,” he muttered.
Without waiting, Max scooped up both women, quickly setting them over his shoulder and ignoring the glances he got from the guards as he picked up Fowl.
With a speed that was only possible with the dexterity he and Cordellia had, they took off running, quickly catching up with the first two parties that were making their way through the streets.
“Be safe!” Cordellia shouted as they raced by, grinning as she saw their expressions.
“At least the manticores aren’t in town or the flying kind,” Fowl shouted. “That would be way worse!”
***
Outside of the city the farming area was fine for about another mile and then they saw the horde of manticores pressing against the adventurers that were answering the towns call for help.
Giant creatures about six feet tall with a lion's head and body and a large scorpion tail on the monster’s ass.
“They're getting overrun!” Cordellia shouted as her bow appeared in her hand.
“We can help for a minute or two, and then we need to head toward the dungeon! The longer we stay, the more that will come out. We’ll only hurt more people by helping longer!”
Max hated saying that, but Tom had already warned him at the beginning when the call came out. The man knew how much Max hated to see people in trouble, but also knew if he stayed too long, more people would be at risk of death and injury.”
Without slowing down, he raced toward the area where two groups had banded together, trying to fight the pack of four manticores that appeared too much for them.
A dozen yards from the group, Max dropped Fowl and quickly set down Tanila and Batrire.
Memories of what it had looked like when the other adventurers or Faction members had come and saved their lives played through his mind as his first swing sliced a manticore in half.
Within mere seconds of arriving, all four were dead, one killed by Fowl, another two killed by Cordellia and the last slain by Max.
“Thank you!” a male human warrior exclaimed as he gasped for air.
“Who's poisoned?” Batrire asked as she moved through their ranks.
As their healer began helping, Max swapped out his weapon for a bow and joined in the target practice with Cordellia, killing the other creatures that were within range, thinning the ranks of the monsters quickly.
“I’m done!” Batrire shouted about thirty seconds later and Max turned, stowing his bow and looking at the two groups who appeared ready to drop from exhaustion.
“You all need to run to town. We’ve got the dungeon. Protect the city from the streets if you must, but don’t stay out here.”
“But–”
“No buts,” Max ordered as he moved to where Batrire was, ignoring the frown she had as she held her arms up slightly.
“Fight another day. You did your job. Leave the rest to us.”
A few nodded, and Max hoisted Tanila into place while grabbing Fowl.
“Let’s go!”
***
It took about ten minutes of running to reach the portal that was glowing green. Cordellia had killed at least a hundred manticores as they raced toward the dungeon, not even needing to slow down as she ran, raining down death with each shot.
“Hold on!” Max shouted as he ran into the portal.
Crystal lines ran through a rocky black canyon that was raised about fifty yards on each side. As soon as he zoned into the dungeon, his sonar recognized the incoming wave of creatures, headed toward them, seeking to exit from where he had just entered the dungeon.

Setting the three down, he pulled out his weapon and pointed at the pack of about thirty creatures racing toward them.
“Let’s clear and keep moving!”
Without waiting, Max raced toward the creatures, noticing that these had a darker hide, almost gray instead of the brown color the ones outside had.
Between the five of them, thirty of the beasts were dead in mere moments, unable to withstand the power they now possessed.
“I can cheat if we don’t want to fight!”
“How far can this go on for?”
Shrugging at Fowl’s question, Max pointed at the canyon that made a turn to the left about fifty yards ahead. He started moving towards it while yelling back at the rest.
“I have no idea, and this could go on for miles. Every second allows the creatures outside to move toward the capital and possibly kill another adventurer or citizen!”
It only took a second before Tanila’s voice rang out.
“Let’s cheat! We may need to fight in the next one and not have this option!”
Stowing his weapon, Max stopped and turned, seeing the other four moving to get near each other.
Smiling, he laughed as Fowl held out his arms and shook his head.
“It’s a good thing I like you or I’d kick your shins.”
Nodding, Max quickly had all three women on his shoulder and lifted Fowl off the ground.
“Hold on tight. I’m not sure how the spider walk will work with you all and I don’t want someone falling off.”
***
The canyon was over five miles long and the twists and turns of it made the entire party glad he cheated. What would probably have taken at least ten times or longer to get through was over in almost four minutes.
Sweat was beginning to form from the pace he was setting, but there was no time to complain. Each second meant the life of an innocent in his mind.
Having used a rope to descend to the green portal, Max killed a pack of thirty that had just come through it. This pack was black-skinned and at least a foot taller than the previous group they had killed.
“They’re getting stronger! I’ll clear the portal on the other side!”
Not waiting for them as the group slid down the rope, Max crossed through, finding himself now in a wide open plain area. The only light came from the half moon that was barely visible, hidden behind clouds. Even though he was in the middle of an open area, no wind was present.
Snarls came all around him and turning Max saw about a hundred yards away the next wave of manticores coming toward him, shimmering in the moonlight.
“Goblin shite, that's a lot of them!” Tanila said as her eyes adjusted.
“Even worse is I do not know where the portal to the boss room might be.”
His bow was releasing death and when Cordellia had made it through the portal, she began helping with the incoming threat.
“Which way?” Fowl asked as he stood there, ready to do something if a beast actually made it to them.
“I’m open for ideas!” Max replied as he shot another one through the heart.
Two more arrows sped from his bow, killing the closest manticore, leaving only about a dozen more that were now within thirty yards.
Fowl moved out to face a pair as they drew close while Talina speared one with her ice spell. Arrows and spells finished the last of this wave quickly.
“Time is important, but these plains could go on for miles in every direction. Do we split up? Is that even safe or worth it?”
Tanila’s question pained Max in a lot of different ways but she was right. Time was important and if they split up, twice as much ground could be covered. The problem was how to split the group and he wasn’t sure if a smaller team could defeat the boss.

“I can race around with my Haste and see what I can find, but I would prefer not to break us up if we don’t have to.”
“Then carry us again,” Fowl said, grunting as he flicked the blood from the two beasts he had killed off his weapon. “Time… that’s our real problem.”
Nodding, Max moved and loaded up everyone as usual.
“Hang on!”
Breaking into a run, Max made sure he was moving as fast as possible before activating the skill. Going from nothing to haste speed was never appreciated by the group.
[Haste]
The plains streaked by as he ran through openings in the lines of manticores all headed toward the portal they had just left. In almost thirteen seconds, he had covered a mile, a dust trail formed behind him as he raced ahead.
If I wasn’t carrying everyone, I could go even faster…
A black stone wall came into view after seventeen seconds and with no portal visible, Max turned left, trying to cover as much ground as possible before his ability ended. Fowl was moaning and the three on his shoulders held on as he turned as safely as possible.
His haste spell faded and the world quickly came back into its normal speed, yet he didn’t set down anyone, not wanting to waste more time.
“Still nothing!” he shouted as he ran across the grassy plains.
“I may have puked!” Batrire shouted back.
Miles passed as he dodged the monsters of this zone, each one taking a little less than a minute.
After ten minutes, a red glow up ahead came into view and Max cursed, wondering if he had picked wrong and should have gone right instead of left.
“I think I found the portal!”
“Now find my stomach!” Fowl replied as they drew nearer to it.
With everyone standing and each of them taking a quick drink and preparing for what was inside, Max looked at Tanila who was frowning.
“A red portal…”
He nodded and motioned to it.
“We weren’t ready then. We are now.”

5 Chapter 223 - The Difference in Power https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-4-stubs-829/chapter/1779366/chapter-223-the-difference-in-power 2024-09-02

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES
HTTPS://WWW.ROYALROAD.COM/FICTION/90677/B-SYNCHRO

B-Synchro

A salaryman is reborn in a world with monsters, futuristic cities, social tensions, and a power called Synchrony.

Weary of the monotony, the salaryman decides to leave everything behind to pursue his dreams, but he dies. Upon awakening, he finds himself in a different body, in a completely unfamiliar world.

Now, he must fend for himself in a hostile environment, completely alone, full of creatures known as B-Synchros—beings with extraordinary abilities that can only be fought by members of an organization called Terra Nexus. Will he survive in this new world?

Art: Taka

What to expect:

- An immersive world with a cast of diverse characters who will recur in the work in one way or another.

- Old-school development and progression with training and skill upgrades (Journey from inexperienced MC to experienced MC.)

- An MC with a body shrouded in mystery, which will gradually unfold throughout the story.

- Exceptional abilities with unique mechanics and conditions for each character to pique your interest.

- Skill rankings, power levels, and enemies.

- Super epic and super powerful monsters that our protagonists will have to deal with.

- Images of the characters and key events created by the author, as long as you support the story by following.

*- A new chapter every **Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday.***

- I'm not a native English speaker, so I appreciate your patience. I'll do my best to improve and provide you with the best possible work.

Chapter 223 - The Difference in Power

His sonar told him that there was a small alcove for the boss room and when his eyes adjusted, the black stone was back with an intricate pattern of glowing crystal almost etched into the floor.

The room was only about a hundred yards across and the boss stood on a large crystal circle that seemed to bathe light upon it from underneath.

Black-skinned, two tails with stingers and standing at about thirteen feet, the boss looked overwhelming.

“Seems a bit anticlimactic,” Fowl muttered as he moved next to Max. “Where’s the fifty foot tall giant?”

“Are we ready?”

Everyone nodded and Max pulled out his weapon, pointing at the boss while glancing over his shoulders at the other.

“Hit it with everything. I’m going all out.”

He could feel Cordellia as she drew her bow, activating her empowered shot. Tanila was summoning a spear, preparing to attack.

Fowl’s short legs were moving toward the boss, shield and weapon ready.

Max, however, was a blur, speeding across the stone floor, ignoring the boss as it roared at him.

Usually he held back in the tower, choosing to not go full speed, knowing that doing so might leave the rest of the party open if he left them behind.

Cordellia had often wondered how he could kite so many monsters with ease, luring them along while attacking and always staying ahead. That was because none was faster than he was. Today was the first time in a while he truly showed off his speed.

[Power Strike]

[Magical Strike]

[Rampage]

It felt like overkill, but he wasn’t playing. Somewhere an adventurer might be about to die, and if he could prevent that by going all out, he would.

His axe cut the head off as the creature raised it, preparing to finish its roar.

The second strike sliced the creature in half while the third quartered the remains.

In less than a second, what would have been impossible to defeat a few months ago was now dead.
“Seriously?!”
Cordellia’s shout rang out behind him, but Max was already moving, stuffing the head and pieces of the body into his storage, hiding every part of the boss before any of it dissolved away.
The light in the crystals began to pulse and a hum came from the floor.
After five seconds an explosion of bright light washed over the room and then vanished, leaving everyone blinking.
“Why did I even bother to come?” Fowl asked, chuckling as he made it to his friend's side. “I mean, you just soloed a boss and basically all of this dungeon.”
“True, but you could have done the same,” Max said as he poked his friend's metal chest piece.
“Not this fast.”
“He’s right,” Batrire said with a grunt. “All that work and you just walk in and slice up the boss, putting its entire body away too. I’m not sure Dexic could have done that.”
Snorting, Max rolled his eyes and shook his head.
“Alright, enough of that. No matter what kind words you say to me, I’m only going to let Tanila sleep with me.”
Fowl chuckled and pointed at the chest that had appeared.
“Man, that seems so tiny…”
“That’s what she said,” their ranger called out.
Groans and more laughter came as Max nodded and moved to the chest. It was a standard size dungeon chest, but compared to what they had been getting lately, it felt very lacking.
Fowl lifted the lid and groaned, reaching in and pulling out a black band with crystal running around it.
“Just the token for the boss. *Enraged Manticore* . I’m not sure it was even able to be enraged.”
Nodding, Max moved to the chest and took his, seeing that indeed the only thing in there was the tokens for killing the boss.
A blue portal appeared after they all had taken their token and, as a group, they moved to it.
“Not what I had hoped for or expected at all, but at least we know we did what was required.”
Everyone nodded, agreeing with Tanila’s statement.
Saving lives was important, but Max knew everyone had been hoping for a little loot.
***
The walk back to town revealed the damage the monsters had done along the way. Beyond the torn up fields and destroyed areas where fights between beasts and adventurers had taken place, a pair of mangled corpses lay by themselves.
With care, they collected the bodies as best they could, wrapping them up in a tarp and storing them for now.
Guards met them on the edge of town, taking the bodies and thanking them for the help in closing the dungeon. Both of the groups from their faction appeared to have helped with the defenses and, as they walked back down the streets, people who lived there were already returning and many cheered or offered thanks for protecting them.
“Feels weird to be on this side of things,” Batrire said after rubbing the heads of a pair of dwarven children who gave a hug to her and Fowl. “I don’t feel like I deserve this kind of praise.”
“That’s how you know you’re doing it for the right reason,” Cordellia replied. “If you only do it for money or the praise, then one might wonder if you could ever allow yourself to be called a hero and not a mercenary.”
Their healer nodded and when they finally reached the city walls, the captain came out to meet them.

“Your response time was quicker than most, if I’m honest, that helped more than you realize. No actual damage was inflicted on the outer city, and that is not always the case. I’ve already started drawing up a report and will acknowledge the help the Golden Axe Faction gave in this break.”
The woman bowed slightly, turning to leave just as quickly as she had come.
“I kind of feel sorry for her,” Tanila said as they watched the captain start barking out orders to the soldiers who were working on keeping the flow of people moving and dealing with problems that arose. “Imagine being responsible for all these lives and yet unable to do much about it without the help of adventurers like ourselves.”
Max nodded and motioned toward the gate.
“Let’s find a cart and head back to the Faction house. I need to ask Tom and Everett a question and want everyone there when I do.”
***
Tom glanced at Everett, and both men were frowning slightly. They had been encouraging and cheering on the group for what they had done, having already heard about the success from the other two parties that had responded.
“So you really want to know the difference between tower climbers and their stats,” Tom said, watching Max, who nodded once. “Is this because of Dexic and –”
“No,” Max replied, stopping Tom from going down that path. “Today made me realize something, and I mentioned it on the carriage ride back with everyone else. When we fought against those dungeon breaks as an adventurer, each one almost left us dead. We were at our limits, fighting against more monsters than we should be trying to deal with, having to overcome impossible odds, all while waiting on someone to save us from the very thing we were trying to protect the citizens from. Sure, those moments teach teamwork and help you learn to depend upon your allies, but the risks are so great, I wonder now how many adventurers die.
“Then came the truth of what we saw when the ogre dungeon broke and we witnessed the tower climbers tear through those creatures like they were nothing. What was pushing us back, threatening to overrun and destroy us, was vanquished in a moment.”
Grunting, Max cleared his throat and leaned forward in his chair.
“Today we were those tower climbers who saved the day. Both groups from here might have been able to defeat the dungeon in time, but it would have taken them a while to get there. Which brings me back to the point I want to know about.
“I witnessed in the Colosseum a fight between tower climbers and they moved so fast that without the crystal and whatever magic slowed down their movements, I wouldn’t have been able to see the fight. Just how strong do people really get by the time one reaches the fiftieth floor?”
Everett tapped Tom’s shoulder and nodded, smirking as he knew the older man read his mind.
“I guess it would be easier to show you, but we’ll have to change one thing. I’ll use my skills and wield a sword that won’t harm you. Likewise, you’ll use a sword that won’t harm me, but they will keep track of successful strikes. In the end, we can decide if that answers your question.”
Max grinned, each of his teeth showing as he cracked his knuckles.
“When do we do this?”
Tom laughed and shook his head.
“Right now. Let’s go outside.”
***
A crowd had gathered from the two parties that were there and the others within the ranks of crafters and servers.
Max studied Tom, seeing that the man wore a set of chain armor that was completely gold like Dexic’s was. His fingers were adorned with rings and even a pair of earrings could be spotted on the man.
His shield was similar in size, gold and emblazoned with an ax on it.
Everett had drawn a few different lines around the field, adding about fifty more yards for everyone to stay back.

Moving the sword around that he had been given, Max felt the weight as if it was there and yet wasn't. The sensation was different, and he had to look a few times to make sure it wasn't disappearing as it became weightless again.
"It's part of the magic," Tom said, studying Max, who was wearing every bit of armor and jewelry as well. "When you swing it the sword will allow you to sense the weight, knowing how the strike should be, but when not actively using it, your mind doesn't register that it's there. Now I want you to know once he calls for this to start, I'm going to go all out. So don't hold back like you did against Dexic."
Smirking, Max nodded and banged the sword against his shield.
"I only wished we had done this before. No matter what happens, just know I appreciate you teaching me."
The older man gave him a nod and moved back about ten yards, cracking his neck once and looking at Everett.
"Alright, the rules are simple. All skills are allowed," the Faction leader said. "Choose what you want to reveal, but know that when I call for you to stop, I expect it to be immediate. If something results in a killing blow, we'll start again. When you both have decided you have had enough, tell me and we'll end this. For now, just know that everyone is watching and they expect a good fight. Both of you understand?"
Each man nodded, smiling at the other.
Shaking his head, Everett moved back from where he had been standing near the two men. Coming to the edge of the field, he glanced at Tanila and saw her expression.
"Nervous?"
She nodded yet was smiling.
"Seth is excited about this and I know he needs it. The real question is, how strong is Tom?"
Grinning, Everett raised his eyebrows at her a few times.
"We're about to find out."
Holding a hand up in the air, he turned and faced all the faction members that were locked on the two men. He couldn't help but notice a few of them appeared to be making bets and wished he had thought about doing that.
"Members of the Golden Axe, may you see what power looks like and attempt to achieve it!" Everett shouted.
Dropping his hand, he yelled "Begin!"

6 Chapter 224 - Tom vs Max

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-4-stubs-829/chapter/1780763/chapter-224-tom-vs-max 2024-09-02

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES
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[The Runic Artist - Book 1 Live on Amazon!]

Where there is a Rune, there is a way!

Nate is a kid from Sydney, Australia who spends his free time indulging in his one true love - art. Graffiti specifically. That is until his 'hobby' catapults him into a new world filled with danger and magic.

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Read Book 1 Now on Amazon and follow the next book on Royal Road!

Chapter 224 - Tom vs Max

Tom and Max collided in the small space between both of them, their shields and weapons slamming into each other as they locked blades, pushing to see who might overcome the other.

Each saw the other's eyes widen as neither of them managed to push around the other as they had expected.

Giving up my halberd was a chunk of my stats... way to be cocky, I guess.

After three seconds of shoving that resulted in nothing, each pushed off the other at the same time, and the dance of swords began.

Tom attacked, shield and sword moving together, and Max's skills were working overtime, trying to dodge, block and parry as the onslaught began.

Combination after combination came at him and Max could tell he held a small lead in the speed department, but the older man was more skilled not just in having a higher tier in sword handling but in the experience department.

Each attack came, sometimes feinting, somehow changing its path instantly. Twice in the first moment, he almost had taken a hit when the path of the sword went a totally different direction, only caught because his sonar allowed him to sense it even when his eyes couldn't follow it.

Evasion was helping him to turn and twist, almost getting caught by the blade when it made it past his shield.

Cheers were coming from everyone and yet Max couldn't focus on that, giving up ground as the older man pressed his advantage, using not just the sword and shield but his knees and feet as well.

Anyone not there to watch the fight and only allowed to hear it would wonder how so much noise of metal on metal could come so quickly. Most of the people could not follow the barrage of attacks, trying to glimpse something as both men and their weapons were a blur.

Max found himself smiling, even though he was already a third of the way toward the edge of the field, for once he could see what true power was like and being able to stand as long as he had so far meant he was similar in some ways.

Tom's sword flashed green as it came at him, striking his blade, the momentum and strength behind the strike sending his sword flying from his grip.

Turned slightly and without a weapon, it was only two more strikes before he took an attack from the blade against his chest and heard Everett shout out, "Stop!"

Immediately, Tom stopped the next attack a few inches from his chest and smiled.

"I'm impressed and hoping that you haven't decided to still hold back."

Shaking his head, Max grinned.

"No sir, that was the most fun I've had in a while."

"Good, now get your sword and let's see if you can land a hit by using an ability or two."

"Begin!"

Both men were moving toward the other once more and this time Max activated his ability inches from their blades connecting.

[Power Strike]

Tom's sword went flying across the field and after a kick to the older man's leg and a few small strikes to an arm, the trainer was struck in the chest, resulting in a win.

"That was sooner than I expected but also a brilliant use of skill timing. Using it right before impact prevents me from having time to activate a skill to defend against it."

"Are you saying you could have prevented that attack?" Max asked.

Shrugging, the trainer moved to get his sword, laughing as he went.

“Only time will tell!”
***
A third clash of weapons came and Max started to anticipate the attacks and combos that Tom was using. Each one was different, but whatever technique he had that allowed for his attack to shift so quickly, it was getting easier to defend against and not get pushed back. Minor errors on his part began to lessen and as two minutes of non stop attacks were blocked and parried, Max found himself laughing even though breathing had become a little harder from the exertion.
Both he and Tom were sweating, but neither were letting up. Every part of him wanted to use another skill to show Tom just how powerful he was, but doing it before everyone wasn’t going to happen. Even if it had just been Tom and himself, Max wasn’t certain he would still give in. Right now, he realized he was strong, but there were still others just as powerful.
Tom had reached the pinnacle of so many and could have killed him with that first strike.
Not being prepared for that and knowing others would have skills just as dangerous, Max needed to keep everything a secret.
One day, he would show Tom.
One day, he would show the world just how powerful he was.
***
“Stop!”
Both men pulled back, sweat running freely, but for over ten minutes neither had landed anything more than a glancing blow on the other's arm or leg. The swords granted no serious injury and as such, the match was a tie.
“You're… stronger than… I expected,” Tom said between deep breaths. “Soon… you’ll be stronger… than most.”
Nodding, Max breathed in a deep breath and grinned.
“One day… I’ll win without… having to use skills.”
Tom nodded, just as out of breath as the younger man, who never ceased to amaze him.
Cheers were coming from those gathered, and Max and Tom waved, smiling, as Everett moved toward the two of them.
“That was a great fight and I’ll admit it went even better than I had hoped.”
The Faction leader held his hand out toward Tom, and the older man shook his head and sighed.
“You’re seriously going to do this here? In front of him?”
Max saw the frown and the way Tom almost seemed to glare at his friend.
“Very well, you can pay me later.”
Max laughed and smiled as the four members of his party came to join them, each of them clapping.
“So all I can say is most of what you two were doing was a blur,” Fowl admitted. “I mean, I could see some of the attacks, but most of the time it was impossible to follow.”
“It wasn’t that bad,” Cordellia said, winking at their dwarven warrior. “Perhaps if you put some stats into dexterity as well as intelligence, you could see more things.”
Everyone laughed and then started walking toward the Faction house when Everett motioned that way.
“Drinks are on me,” their leader said. “For today's success in clearing the dungeon break and for Seth’s ability to hold off someone who I know would kick my ass every day of the week.”
***
“Were you seriously going to ask me for these back in front of him?”
Everett nodded and accepted the two pieces of jewelry that Tom had just handed him.
“Do you feel it’s better to lie to him about the difference in stats or be honest with the boy?”

“I don’t think those two rings would have mattered if he used his actual weapon. Something tells me he’s got at least another ten or fifteen strength in that. We were so closely matched that I was surprised when I couldn’t push him back at all.”
“And he was faster than you by just a little bit.”
Blowing a raspberry, Tom flopped into the chair across from his friend and nodded.
“By the time he reaches the fiftieth floor, I’m certain no one I know will be able to stand up to him.”
“Which is why we need to make sure that happens. Keep pushing them, but be smart about it. Everything I see points to them being the first to break the fiftieth floors and into the sixtieth realm in a hundred or more years.”
Tom nodded, closing his eyes and taking a deep breath.
“If you’ll be quiet for a bit, I’m going to rest. I haven’t worked that hard in ages.”
Everett chuckled for a moment and then stood up, giving his friend a pat on the shoulder before leaving his office.
***
“I guess you have your answer now,” Tanila said as she watched Max finish up the hammers he was crafting for the Faction. “You’re closer to the strength of most who stop halfway through. Surely that means something.”
Sighing, Max nodded as he polished and cleaned the metal and handles. Each hammer was an exact match of the other, designed to be used by a warrior who apparently dual wielded them. The stats were going to boost their damage by a lot.
“A hundred strength and dexterity if both are used at the same time,” Max said as he pointed at the one he finished first. “Tell me that isn’t something to be excited about for a normal climber.”
“But we’re not normal, and you need to remember that. Two more days and we’ll start on the twentieth floor. Then a whole new level of pain will come as we grind out more levels.”
Max laughed and shook his head at Tanila.
“You seem to forget we’re eventually going to regrind all fifty levels one day. Perhaps you should give in and agree we can start that process now, taking advantage of breaks while we let skill cooldowns reset.”
“And perhaps you might remember there is more to life than just grinding in a tower. One day, you’ll be forced to spend time with me outside this room and your other mistress.”
Max laughed, setting the hammer he had finished crafting, and sighed.
“What’s bad is now I only get three to five experience per item I make. Whatever bonus I was originally getting was for crafting something new or unique. Maybe if I make a staff or bow that is like Fowl’s, I might get another bump in the experience.”
Groaning, Tanila shook her head and stood up from her chair.
“I’m going upstairs. You’re welcome to join me or stay down here, worrying about stats and experience.”
As she turned to leave, Max quickly opened the chest next to him and put both hammers in it.
“Just hold on! I’m coming!”
***
Max glanced around the tower, frowning as they waited in line to enter.
“What’s wrong?” Tanila asked quietly.
“Can you feel that?”
“The same sensation you had before?”
Nodding, Max casually glanced around where they were again, looking at the tower climbers present, the area where everyone unloaded from or climbed into a carriage when done, and even at the empty space of the area where they stood. His sonar revealed nothing but those he could see.
“Maybe I’m going crazy. Just imagine how much worse I’d be if I hadn’t taken those days off with you.”
Rolling her eyes, Tanila nodded and smiled at the guards who were about to send them on ahead.

“Any bets?” Fowl asked.
“Yeah, your arse is going to get a foot up it for asking that question again outside the tower.”
Ignoring Batrire and her pleasant personality, Fowl smiled as he looked at everyone else.
“Nope. In the end, it doesn’t matter what I want,” Cordellia replied. “Whatever the gods choose is what we will get.”
Max nodded and strode up to the portal, reaching out, touching it.
A list of floors they could enter appeared, and the twentieth one was now the top option. Selecting it, he portaled over, fully geared for battle.
***
A wave of heat immediately assaulted his face and Max winced, opening his storage and pulling out the ring that would help with the oppressiveness of the dungeon they had just entered.
Rising before them was a crooked trail carved into the side of a giant mountain that disappeared into the clouds above. Heat from a sun that felt too close baked them and Max smiled a little as the groans from the rest of his party acknowledged their love of this tower floor already.
“That looks like one hell of a climb,” Fowl said. “Are those caves up there on the mountainside?”
Max shrugged and glanced at Cordellia, who squinted, peering off into the distance.
“It’s too far for even me to see, but what I do notice is that if one falls, it's a long way down.”
“At least the path up looks to be wide,” Fowl said. “And best of all, it's not some dark cavern we can’t see in.”
Max nodded and after everyone motioned they were ready, all of them began the journey to the base of the mountain, ready to see what the tower threw at them next..

6-2 Shameless Plug - Book 4 Live on Amazon https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-4-stubs-829/chapter/1783930/shameless-plug-book-4-live-on-amazon 2024-09-02

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES
HTTPS://WWW.ROYALROAD.COM/AMAZON/B0D5YPWPHQ

Ultimate Level 1 LitRPG (6 Books Finished)

Almost 70,000+ Copies sold for Books 1-3!

Book 4 is LIVE on Amazon!

Read it there and then come to Royal Road for book 5! (books 5 & 6 are written waiting edits!)

Not a real chapter... I know... I'd toss tomorrow's up today - but then, I'd have nothing tomorrow.

Book 4 is live on Amazon (and book 2's audio hits on the 3rd). I just wanted to say thank you again for supporting me and reading this story! I'm super excited to show what happens in books five and six as I write book seven. It's hard to believe we are coming down to the last three books (7, 8, and 9) in the series.

It has been a wild ride, and being at DragonCon has been beyond my expectations. Each day has been an encouraging moment to keep writing, and I can't wait until I'm back home and able to attack those keys again.

7 Chapter 225 - For The Love of Honey https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-4-stubs-829/chapter/1784955/chapter-225-for-the-love-of-honey 2024-09-03

Chapter 225 - For The Love of Honey

“Looks like a swarm of bees up ahead,” Cordellia said, as she used her hand to shade her eyes. “Maybe five or six. I can’t really tell as they fly up and down around the bend we’re coming upon.”

“Bows and spells?” Max asked, as he looked at the rest of the group. “Fowl you okay being up front a little in case one comes while we’re using the bows?”

Fowl shrugged as he nodded. His shield and weapon appeared in his hands as he moved ahead.

“Alright, I guess we’ll pick a target and try to shoot multiple ones. No idea how much health they have, but we should be able to knock them out of the sky if you can take their wings off.”

Cordellia nodded and nocked an arrow as they moved along the winding mountainside trail.

When they were within bow range, Max whistled and both of them started loosing arrows at the bees, unsure how many were going to end up coming at them but wanting to use the distance to cut down on that number if possible.

The group of bees flew toward them, and everyone saw the dark red bands along their body between the black sections. Large pincers lined their mouths and red eyes that looked like rubies locked on the group that had assaulted them with arrows.

An ice spear flew up the incline and blew a hole in the middle of one bee, causing it to flutter and fall, crashing to the ground before rolling off the edge of the trail.

Max’s arrows peppered the bee he was shooting, and he summoned an ice spear as Tanila had, sending it at the same one, killing it while it was about thirty yards off.

Cordellia had killed hers already and was sending ice arrows at the one on the right, leaving just one more coming right toward Fowl.

Max fired arrows at Cordellia’s target, trying to ensure it was down before it reached them and saw the one about to engage with Fowl stop approaching.

A bright orange light grew in its mouth and suddenly flames erupted, sending a thick stream of fire at their dwarven warrior.

Fowl held up his shield, the flames spilling around the edges, splattering to the ground and burning like a thick liquid that didn’t want to go out.

“Help me! It burns!”

Fowl’s hit points weren’t really falling that much, and Max could see that the fire the bee had sprayed out was sticking to his shield, still burning. The flaming goop on his armor was running down his plate mail slowly, leaving a trail of fire everywhere it touched.

An empowered shot from their ranger connected with the bee's head, cutting off the flow of flames and exploding in a shower of burnt gore.

“Drop your shield!” Talina shouted as she raced toward their warrior. When she got close and his shield hit the ground, her Ice Nova went off, blanketing the area in frost, quenching the fire on his shield and armor.

“That hurts so bad! Like when a hot piece of metal that flakes off when hitting it with a hammer and slips down your shirt while forging. You can’t get it out fast enough and burns like the gods!”
“Well, that’s new,” Batrire said as she moved to where Fowl was breaking off the hardened goop on his armor. “The damage wasn’t bad as your health barely moved, but I can imagine it gets worse depending on how much you’re covered with.”
“It’s like a flaming honey,” Cordellia said as she bent down and chipped a piece of extinguished goop on Fowl’s shield. “Part of me wants to taste it, but the other part of me doesn’t want to possibly die.”
A few chuckles came and Fowl shook his head at the ranger in disbelief.
“That’s rule number two of adventuring. Don’t stick random stuff from the dungeon in your mouth.”
Cocking her eyebrow, she looked at Fowl and sighed.
“I’m afraid to ask, but what’s rule number one?”
“Don’t let your healer die.”
Batrire nodded and grinned as she gave a deep bow.
“Ok, enough chatting,” Max said as he waited for Fowl to break the stuff off his shield. “Store some of that and we’ll see what uses it might have. Honestly, something that burns and sticks is a pretty cool item if one uses it right.”
Tanila groaned as she flicked some black gore from her hands, holding up one of the ruby eyes from a corpse that hadn’t exploded as she harvested its head.
“We need to collect these. Seth, why don’t you try opening one of the bees away from us and see if there is a pouch of this liquid they shot inside? That would be fantastic if so.”
Sighing, Max moved and did as Tanila asked, knowing he had the regeneration and resistance that if something went wrong, his chances of dying were way less than the others.
Ten minutes later, he had harvested three pouches that were a little bigger than his hand. Each one dripped of the liquid that smelled like honey. Having put a few drops on the ground and using magic, the liquid burned and stayed lit until he used ice magic to extinguish it.
“Even the water didn’t put it out,” Fowl muttered. “Man, that makes it some nasty stuff.”
Nodding, Max moved to where the four of them had been standing and held his bow out.
“I guess we’ll go into range mode and see what we can do about limiting the number of bees we face.”
***
Hours passed as swarms of five to eight attacked, yet after the first group, Max and Tanila worked together to freeze two of the bees in larger groups while summoning air walls that caused the insects to slam into them as they flew. One test showed the air wall could stop the stream of fire and when it finally broke, all the goop that had been sticking to it fell straight down to the ground.
“I swear I’m going to make you all buy me a hair potion,” Fowl grumbled. “Look at this! I’ve lost a foot of length on my beautiful beard.”
Batrire sighed, and Max could only imagine how much that mattered to his friend.
“We’ll see what can be done,” Max stated as he gave his friend a pat on his armor. “No one appreciates what you do more than us.”
Grumbling a little but appeased at those words, Fowl sighed and motioned up the path where a sharp bend was.
“I guess it doesn’t matter. No one said climbing a tower would be safe for one's beard. Regardless, we're moving at a good pace and the shade of the mountain helps with the heat of that sun.”
Each of them nodded, moving along the path. As they got closer to the edge, the sound of insects in the air gained their attention.
“Let me scout it out first.”

Max Stealthed and moved around the corner, finding that about twenty yards away were four dragonflies., Each of them was about six feet in length and had a deep red body. They were taking turns ripping off chunks of a dead bee on the trail.
Moving back to the others, Max popped out of stealth.
“So there are four dragonflies eating a dead bee. I’m not sure if they’ll attack or not, but we have to go up the path. Thoughts?”
“Most insects and animals aren’t passive,” Cordellia replied. “We’d be taking a risk by walking up to them and hoping they are friendly. I mean we could send Fowl in first and see if they like dwarf instead of bee but that’s your call.”
“I agree, kill em all,” Fowl growled as he glared at their ranger.
“I can attack and kill from stealth. Maybe even get close with my weapon in melee range and take down two.”
Tanila smiled and pointed at the bend up ahead.
“I guess we’ll see if they like humans as well. Now go be a warrior and take the risk.”
His halberd cleaved through the first dragonfly that was near him and as he moved towards the other near it, his attack managed to slice off the wings as it went airborne, sending it into a spin before crashing down onto the ground.
An arrow pierced the eye of the one on the right as an ice spear tore through the body of the one on the left.
The one that was partially blinded let out a weird noise that made Max’s sonar skill fizzle for a second, and then the stinger in its tail turned white as it flew higher.
A beam of light shot from the stinger at Cordellia who dodged to the side, finding a stone wall barely summoned in time by Tanila as the attack began boring through the stone.
Unable to reach the wasp with his melee weapon, Max quickly swapped it out for his bow, sending arrows at it while forming an ice spear.
With his sonar working again, he knew Fowl had moved to where the attack that was still coming from the wasp’s tail was aimed, using his shield to block the attack.
After his ice spell took off the dragonfly’s head, its attack immediately stopped as it plunged toward the path.
Charging the last dragonfly that was still struggling to get airborne, Max’s halberd appeared before it came down, cutting the insect's body in half, his blade sinking into the dirt of the trail.
“What in the gods was that?” Fowl cried out from behind. “Look at my shield!”
Max turned and saw that there was a glowing red spot from the concentrated attack. The stone wall had a hole that was almost completely gone from where the dragonfly had attacked.
“Ok, I’m not sure what the next four floors hold, but I just want to go on the record that this stuff isn’t fun,” Cordellia said. “Bees that shoot flaming honey. Dragonflies that use a ray attack. What the hell is the tower thinking?”
“I don’t even want to think about it,” Fowl muttered as he picked up the red gem that had appeared from the first one Max had killed. “For now, I just want to make it through this floor without finding myself losing any more facial hair.”
Max chuckled and went to work, cutting off the stingers from the corpses.
***
Six hours later, they found themselves nearing the top of the mountain.
“For the last hour that buzzing has gotten noticeably louder,” Fowl complained. “Tell me this can’t get any worse.”
Max chuckled as a rock from behind bounced off their warrior's plate armor, tossed by Batrire who it appeared had stored a few in her dimensional necklace.
“Stop talking like that,” their healer called out. “One day you’re going to curse us.”
Max glanced at Fowl who appeared frustrated at her statement, but the dwarf said nothing else.
“You ok? Something seems a little off.”
Clearing his throat, Fowl nodded once.
“This stuff scares me if I’m honest. I’ve been doing some reading–”
He stopped talking, seeing how Max’s jaw had dropped.

“I read… not a lot, but I have. Tom gave me some books to help me prepare like you do. These things aren’t normal for our level. Everett is right. We’re fighting above where we should be.”
“Unfortunately, I think you’re right. Which begs the question what are we really going to face down the road?”
Shrugging, Fowl pointed at the top of their path and at how it curved around a bend.
“Whatever we’re facing is up ahead and my brain almost hurts from the constant sound of buzzing. Either there is an army of them up ahead or something much bigger awaits. Either way, I can’t imagine it being good for us.”
***
“Holy elf tits,” Batrire muttered as they stood on a flat clearing at the top of the mountain. Five hundred yards or more of a square flat space stretched before them and in the air had to be at least fifty of the bees and one giant queen bee.
It was over twenty feet long and had red, black and purple sections on its body. The pincers above its mouth reminded them of some of the other insects they had faced. Pairs of bees were bringing dragonfly corpses to the queen, and it only took two bites for her to eat the charred body. The swarm of bees were all about fifty yards or higher in the air and after feeding the queen, the pairs would fly back to the left and over the mountain.
“Maybe I should apologize for my earlier words,” Fowl muttered. “Perhaps I did curse us.”
Max shook his head, well aware that what they were looking at had been here since the tower floor was created.
“No, it wasn’t you. Now we just need to figure out how to finish this floor.”

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Book 4 is LIVE on Amazon!

As always I appreciate the reviews on amazon as well as those who read it via KU!

8 Chapter 226 - A Conversation with Bob https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1786452/chapter-226-a-conversation-with-bob 2024-09-04

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES [LINK

https://geni.us/pandoraunchained1]

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Chapter 226 - A Conversation with Bob

“Look over there, in the stone face. It’s a hole,” Cordellia said. “Based on the angle of this mountain, I almost didn’t see it, but the bee flies from there instead above the mountain.”

Max nodded and saw that she was right.

“But why is the queen out of that hole?” Fowl asked.

“It’s because the wasps are inside that space,” Max replied. “They have invaded it and the queen is here, eating and, I would assume, getting stronger.”

“How do we get across this space?” Batrire asked. “I think I can see the portal off on the other side.”

“We’re going to have to fight our way across it,” Tanila replied. “The bigger question is, how do we fight that many at once?”

No one said anything as everyone tried coming up with a plan that might work.

“We don’t. I’ll carry everyone and we’ll skip this spot. I don’t see any option for us winning this fight. Even if we tried to lure them down the path, we’d be severely outnumbered and the trail isn’t where we want a fight like that. They could surround us, pinch us in, and attack. With a queen bee, I’m guessing they would be smarter than usual.”

“So we are going to just skip the boss and all this experience?” Fowl asked, his voice sounding shocked at Max’s idea.

“Live another day. Beat the floor. That’s our plan. Just like the maze, our goal was making it through and surviving. I don’t see this being a fight we win.”

Max got everyone in position and took a deep breath. Racing forward, his speed was faster than the bees could react to.

The queen bee let out a loud shriek and as one the swarm turned, angling toward the group of adventurers that were already half way and closing in on the portal.

Seconds ticked by and Max knew the plan had been the best option as he sensed a large glob of flaming liquid enter his sonar skill range. It was so wide it would probably cover a twenty yard area when it hit.

Half a second before it impacted at the portal location, Max raced through it, the group stumbling and tripping as they found themselves outside the tower.

Groans and moaning came as they picked themselves up off the ground, after having rolled across the ground as a group.

“Everyone ok?”

Max saw the guards rushing over and waved them off.

“I think I broke something,” Cordellia said, her high voice hiding the pain she was feeling.
Having freed herself from the pile, Batrire took care of their ranger's arm and the rest saw the looks on the two guards' faces.
“Does this happen often?” Fowl asked.
“Occasionally and unfortunately, when it does not, everyone makes it back out,” the guard replied. “Since all five of you are here, it would appear things worked out after all.”
“Wasn’t how we wanted it to go, but sometimes getting out is the best choice,” Max said. “Sorry if we worried you all.”
Nodding, the guards moved back to their usual positions.
“That was embarrassing,” Tanila whispered.
“I’d rather be a little embarrassed than dead,” Max replied. “And something tells me they're ok with how this went since we all made it out.”
***
Tom had said little as the party ate, mulling over the information they had shared.
“You’re awfully quiet,” Batrire said as she studied the older man.
“Wisdom doesn’t come easily for most, and I’m glad you all decided not to fight. I’ve run through about every possible option I can think of and I don’t believe there was a way you could have won that encounter,” Tom replied. “Some of the tower floors get like that, but usually not as bad already. That’s what has me concerned.”
“But what we found isn’t uncommon?”
Making a pained face, their trainer shrugged.
“We’ve had substances like what you described, and I know for certain Alfreda will want to do some research on what you brought back. Substances like those have a lot of uses both on the alchemy side and on the…” He paused, and any attempt there had been to hide his pain failed. “On the explosive side. One can make powerful devices to help in the tower against groups of monsters or even bosses. The problem is how dangerous they are to make.”
Fowl was about to ask a question when he yelped and scowled at Batrire.
“Well, the good news is we survived,” Max said. “The bad news is, I can’t even imagine what tomorrow holds.”
***
Max couldn’t help but smile as he listened to Tanila’s breathing. She was sound asleep next to him, her red hair spread all over the pillow.
Closing his eyes, he called out again, hoping for an answer.
Are we ever going to have the conversation we both know needs to happen?
Silence was the only response and doing what he could to stay calm, Max tried to focus deeper inside, knowing there was a skill that often only showed itself when it wanted or felt the need was great.
We need to talk about the tower and how we are going to manage the future between the two of us. You want one thing and I want another. Don’t forget you told me we can work together.
Minutes passed and, finally tired from the effort of what he was attempting to do, Max fell asleep.
I heard you but it is easier if you sleep, and we meet like this.
Max found himself in a small stone room, his alter image sitting on a wooden chair across from him. Glancing down, the chair he was in was an exact copy.
Why are we having to meet like this?
As I have told you countless times, it takes power for us to talk outside of this space. Power I would prefer not to waste on simple conversation. Here, inside your mind, in the world of dreams, that is lessened, and we can be in this space, hidden from those who might attempt to pry and listen in.
Max started to respond, but his reflection held up a hand, a slight frown upon its face.
Time passes quickly here. We do not have time for a thousand questions. What is it you are proposing?

The tower is harder and the last five floors I haven't gained a single skill or stat point. Is this something you have done?
Laughter echoed through the room as his image smirked and shook its head.
No, that does not serve me or you. I could have at one point disabled that, but you have been a very difficult host. There is no doubt you would die before giving in to what none has ever resisted. What you have fought was either weaker or not something I can consume yet. In a time when I evolve again, I should be able to grow stronger from the dead.
Rubbing his face, Max felt confused. The bees and dragonflies hadn't been that tough. The problem had been their abilities and powers.
So what is taking place with the tower? Why are we facing things stronger than most should?
His reflection crossed its arms and frowned.
The tower is a being, a power, a lifeform. Each version of it across every world that has been given one is different. You do not know what beings exist across the other planets out there. The illusion of *monsters* in your mind is actually just like you on their own worlds. There are planets filled with ogres and orcs that build cities, raise children and slaughter dungeons full of humans that seek to kill them.
Max felt confused for a moment as his mind considered what his skill was telling him. To learn about other worlds from Tanila had been a lesson in gods and power, but to hear what they considered evil and a monster was normal elsewhere eroded at his beliefs about everything he had ever learned.
Worlds of monsters–
Worlds of lifeforms. Do not forget there are thousands of *gods* all who seek to grow stronger, helping their kind achieve that. Some make them in the likeness of themselves. Even that dragon you encountered is such a being. A far more powerful being than you will ever imagine for quite some time. But enough of this line of discussion. How do you propose we work together?
Sighing, Max nodded and shelved the thousand questions he had.
I need to get stronger and you need me to do the same thing. Instead of fighting each other, how about we agree to work together in a different way? If the moment comes and I need help, offer it at no cost. On the flip side, if we encounter a scenario where you can be free to satisfy the desires you have while keeping those you know I would not want to harm safe, I will give in and allow you to have that moment.
A smirk appeared on his reflection and laughter once more echoed off the walls of the stone room, even though the image never opened its mouth.
It would seem advantageous for both of us to come to an agreement like that. I would be willing to strike that bargain.
Max nodded and held out his hand, watching his image cock an eyebrow before mimicking him, their hands touching and a weird sensation flowing through him.
Now that we have settled that, tell me how much more power do you need before you can evolve again?
That is not a simple thing to quantify because not all power is the same and each time I gain a new skill or assist you in some way it uses power disproportionately. Imagine you have a barrel at the house where you live and are trying to fill it with water from a stream a mile away. Every day, you need a drink but you cannot drink from the bucket or the stream, only the barrel. Laundry, cooking, every part of life requires water and yet only the barrel can be used for that. Tell me how would you fill that bucket up faster?
Max snorted and shrugged.
Get another bucket? Have friends help? Move the barrel closer to the stream?
His reflection nodded and smiled at those responses.
Each of those are appropriate answers and yet some are easier to do than others. Most of the time, I have cut down on the amount of notifications

that would arise each time a skill is consumed and weaker than what you already have. Like today, the skills you might have hoped to consume were not possible for you based on your body type. You cannot suddenly start spewing liquid fire from your mouth and I doubt you would want your lower appendage to shoot rays of power at your enemies.
Max roared with laughter, imagining the last option and how Fowl would have gotten a kick out of that.
So you are constantly gaining power, just not sharing that knowledge with me.
Correct, but even worse is the size of the barrel you are trying to fill. If I could show it to you, the truth is the vastness of it might overwhelm you. When I evolve again and reach legendary rank, know that to achieve the next one would be the size of your world.
Max's mind hurt as he tried to consider how much power that had to be. He knew there were cities and land across the giant waters and yet visually being able to imagine how one could fill that kind of space seemed impossible.
So what do I need to be doing? The weapon crafting has been helping my party and I don't feel the armor crafting is worth it right now. Just continue climbing the tower?
A grunt came from his reflection and Max thought he recognized the face that just appeared when stumped by a question.
Your world is vast and there is power to be found outside the tower. Many creatures could provide other abilities and skills, but it would take time and great effort to find them. Even then, I doubt you could defeat most of them. A few dragons exist in your world and those would be a boon if you managed to defeat them, yet I'm uncertain how your new ally would respond to such an act.
As such, for now, continue to climb. Today was a smart move. Even if you had given yourself to me completely, I doubt I could have taken on that many creatures. Just be prepared and use your mind. Each day you are getting smarter, craftier, and more cunning. Soon you shall be like a star, shining in the sky and when that day comes people will notice you and the actual battle shall begin.
Some will try to control you, others may try to remove you. For now, do not worry about what you cannot fix, grow stronger and wake up. Our time here is done.
Max felt a weight suddenly pressing against his chest and saw the room he was in was starting to fade away.
But–
Wake up.
"Seth! Wake up! You're tossing and turning!"
Max's eyes opened up, and he saw Tanila had her hand on his chest and was shaking him.
"What?"
"You're moving around and thrashing like a snake," she complained. "Is everything ok?"
Light was spilling into the room through the windows and Max saw the concerned look on her face.
"I'm fine," he replied with a smile. "Actually… I'm actually doing really well."
Grabbing her hand, he pulled her close and kissed her for a moment before pulling back.
Tanila laughed and smacked her mouth a few times.
"Morning breath… Perhaps we should both go brush our teeth first."
Laughing, Max nodded and gave her one more quick kiss on the cheek before rolling out of bed.
Taking a deep breath he let it out and smiled.
"Let's get that done and then meet everyone. I'm feeling really good about today!"

9 Chapter 227 - That Sweet Cold Feeling https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1787914/chapter-227-that-sweet-cold-feeling 2024-09-06

Chapter 227 - That Sweet Cold Feeling

“It’s a city made with moving gears,” Fowl said, his eyes wider than Max could ever remember. “I mean look at it! There are moving parts and if my eyesight isn’t wrong, those are automatons of some sort on the walls!”

Everyone else nodded, seeing what Fowl was excited about.

An entire city made of metal lay before them about a quarter of a mile away. Large golems made from metal with giant gears on their chest patrolled an enormous wall of patch worked metal sheets.

The city before the wall had houses made of different colored metals with steam and smoke rising from them. Inside the area were creatures moving around, but they were still too far off to make out what kind they were.

“This is stuff of legends,” Batrire said. “Dwarves used to create stuff like this a long time ago, but the knowledge hasn’t been talked about or shared in a few generations. Apparently, the power of those creations was dangerous and the other races asked for no more to be made.”

“I can see how a twenty or thirty foot tall golem made of metal might upset those who used melee weapons or arrows,” Cordellia replied. “I guess what chance do we have against something as powerful as that then?”

Max felt Tanila’s gaze and turned his head slightly, smiling as he winked at her.

“We’ll be fine. Nice and slow. Besides, we have a few extra tricks up our sleeves. Both Tanila and I have lightning, and even our ranger can shoot arrows infused with it.”

A few grumbles came, but everyone seemed willing to try fighting whatever the tower had thrown at them on this floor.

“You’re certain?” Fowl asked as he and Max moved a few yards ahead of the three women. “Those golems or automatons, as some had called them, can pack a nasty hit. Many were rumored to have been infused with magic.”

Max grunted and shrugged.

“Eventually we’ll face something bad and I don’t want to play that game of skipping floors. You and I both know we’re nearing the halfway point to floor fifty.”

His dwarven friend nodded and began rotating his shoulders.

“Fine, but if things go wrong, just remember, I told you so.”

***

Seventy yards from the outer edge of the city, outside the gigantic walls that ran around whatever inner city was inside, they got to see the creatures they would face.

“Those are a type of goblin and some halfbreed of dwarf,” Batrire muttered. “For them to work together like that is against everything Ockrim professes!”

Max and Cordellia stood next to each other, looking at the packs of enemies that were moving around the town in groups of four to seven. Usually only one wore plate-like armor with the others dressed in leather. A few had a *rifle* as Batrire had explained it. An ancient item for dwarves that could still be seen in the museum in the dwarven capital.

“So two ranged dwarves, one dwarven warrior, and I’m not sure if that’s a goblin caster?”

Cordellia shook her head.

“It has a lot of belts across its chest and waist, and I see about twelve potions of some kind strapped to it.”

“A ranged potion throwing goblin…” Max muttered. “This is going to be fun.”

Their ranger snorted and shook her head.

“Fun… You’re crazy but it will be interesting. What’s the plan?”

“I’ll assume the guns can shoot as far as your bow. I do not know how hard they will hit, but we’ll have to assume it will hurt. The goblin surely can’t throw that far. So you focus the ranged one on the right, Tanila focuses the one on the left. Fowl will get their attention and I’ll go in via stealth and try to kill the goblin.”
“And if things go wrong?”
Shrugging, Max pointed at their warrior.
“Hopefully he doesn’t die.”
***
Max was halfway to the pack, moving faster than he had ever believed possible while stealthed. No other groups had come close to this one and as he counted down the seconds, he felt the ice spear enter his sonar and knew the fight was about to start.
Cordellia’s shot was empowered and it knocked down her target. A glowing, shimmering white shield had flashed around it before breaking in a dazzling display of light, ripping through its chest.
Tanila’s spell hadn’t been affected by the barrier and her ice spear put a helmet-sized hole where the other ranged dwarf’s heart should have been. The warrior raced forward, its jet black beard flapping in the wind as it charged Fowl, who roared back at it.
The goblin yanked off a potion and tossed it on the injured ranged dwarf, causing it to glow and Max watched as the dwarf stood up in a few seconds, the hole now gone.
Almost immediately another potion was being tossed, and it landed against the healed dwarf, covering it in a purple glow, causing not just the gun wielding creature to grow twice as big, but its equipment as well.
Moving as fast as he could, Max got near the goblin and swung his weapon, the blade of his halberd taking the head off the creature.
For the first time in so long, a cold rush filled him and Max grinned.
[8 Intelligence Consumed]
[8 Wisdom Consumed]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [Alchemy]?]
[Yes / No]
Ignoring the option for a skill he hadn’t fathomed ever having, Max moved toward the ten foot tall dwarf that was pointing its long gun at the pack.
An explosion rang out from the weapon and something flew from the weapon so fast that Max could barely sense that an object had actually come from it.
Cordellia’s scream filled his ear and as her health plummeted, Max crossed the seven yards between him and the dwarf that was bringing the weapon back to near its face.
His halberd was a blur, slicing into the dwarf’s leg and cutting it clean off.
The gun boomed again as the gunner fell, firing upward into the air.
With one eye on the dwarf and his other focused on their ranger's health bar that had dipped down to twenty percent and was now back up to about ninety, Max brought his weapon down, tearing through the dwarf’s shoulder and severing the left arm.
Another strike ended its life and as another cold sensation came, Max ignored it for a moment, turning to see Fowl was bashing in the dwarf's chest he was facing.
Glancing at the other three, he saw Cordellia was standing up slowly, a hole inside her armor where her right shoulder was.
“I got it!” Fowl shouted as he finished off his foe.
Turning, Max moved quickly, grabbing the gun from the one hand that still held it and then moving to the goblin he had killed, carefully cutting away the leather belts and storing them and the potions.
***
“What happened?”
Cordellia sighed as she tapped the spot with her left hand on her shoulder.
“Whatever that was that came from the gun, it moved so fast I couldn’t dodge it. It blew through my shoulder and for a moment I was afraid I was going to die.”
“I had you,” Batrire said, her tone a little more chipper than usual. “No matter what, I'll always have your back.”

Their ranger nodded and touched the spot where her armor was missing. The hole was the size of a gold coin and Max shuddered to think what that might have done to Tanila or Batrire had it hit them.
“Now I remember why guns were no longer made,” Batrire said. “The damage of them against non warriors was unbelievable. In the hands of a skilled gunslinger, they could take down a mage or ranger before they ever heard the sound of the gun.”
Max winced and nodded, now a little more concerned about the need to move through the city.
A small notification waited for him in the corner of his vision and focusing on it, Max felt his eyes widen.
[8 Dexterity Consumed]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [Gun Handling]?]
[Yes / No]
Selecting yes, Max felt the knowledge of the weapon skill enter his mind.
[Skill Knowledge Requirement Met]
[Processing Possible Upgrade]
[Four Ranged Weapon Skills Acquired]
[Combining Skills into New Skill]
[Range Weapon Mastery Acquired]
[Skill Level Upgraded to Epic]
His mind exploded with knowledge as he learned about a slew of other ranged weapons he had never known. Pulling the gun from his storage, Max inspected it and flipped the switch that would activate it, feeling it power up in his hands. On the side of the gun he saw six glowing lines and knew it meant there were six more shots left in it. He also knew this was a rifle and there were smaller guns that fit in a single hand.
“Ugh… I should have searched the bodies for these,” Max said as he slid a cartridge out of the rifle. “This is the ammo, kind of like arrows, that the gun needs to work.”
He saw everyone but Tanila’s faces go slack as their jaws descended.
“You can use those?!” their ranger asked. “How?”
“Part of my skill,” Max said with a shrug. “What’s scary is I can tell this is not something I want getting out in the world. Batrire’s right. If people had these again, the damage they could do would be insane against healers and leather wearers.”
“But not against us?” Fowl asked, closing his mouth finally.
“No… I can tell you the bullet would bounce off our armor. It would hurt from the impact but wouldn’t do what it did to Cordellia.”
“So what are you going to do with the two guns you picked up?” Tanila asked.
Frowning, Max nodded.
“We can collect maybe two more and after that, stop. A few more cartridges would be nice for myself, but I’d prefer to keep this a secret from most.”
Everyone nodded slowly and Cordellia was still frowning at Max, who was reading the skill he had just gained.
[Skill Description - Ranged Weapon Mastery]
*****
Ranged Weapon Mastery - Epic Skill: This skill provides mastery of all ranged weapons, even ones not previously learned. Every attack will be more likely to successfully hit the location they aim at. Attacks will have a higher chance of critically striking and doing increased damage. Mastery grants an improved understanding of combination attacks. With this rank of skill the ability of an Empowered Ranged Attack is granted.
Empowered Ranged Attack - Epic: Provides 2x normal damage for one ranged attack. Thirty minute cooldown.
*****
“Seth? Are you listening?”

Shaking his head, Max focused on their ranger, who was tapping her foot, glaring at him.
“What?”
“You said one day you’d tell me about your skill. Is today that day?”
Sighing, Max shook his head.
“Not yet, but once we hit the fiftieth tower floor, if not before then, I’ll tell you.”
A low groan came from her, but she nodded, ignoring the looks the others had been giving.
“Give me one more moment if you don’t mind. I’m reading something on the skill.”
Instead, he selected yes to learning Alchemy and immediately possessed the knowledge of making potions and their effects.
[Skill Description - Alchemy]
*****
Alchemy - Epic Skill: The user may craft standard potions of epic quality. Potions crafted have a twenty percent chance to be twice as strong as the standard version. Potions have a five percent chance of being considered three times stronger. Materials used may aid in the chance of higher-grade potions. Potions may be stored for one week in dimensional storage during the crafting process with no degradation of the process. Skill also grants the ability to understand the properties of all potions equal to skill rank. Potions above the skill rank may be partially identified.
*****
His mind now knew exactly what those potions in his storage did. Even though he had only glanced at them for a moment, it was as if he had a note with the effects for each written down.
Oh boy… When Fowl lets me use that one potion on him he is going to love me.
Inside was one more of the growth potions that granted the one it splashed against twice their normal size, including armor and weapons, two times their normal strength and constitution, while lowering their other stats by half for one minute. Two other healing potions also granted massive healing. The other six were a combination of explosive or poison potions to be used on others.
“That must be one long skill description,” Fowl said as he elbowed Max slightly. Are we good to go?”
Nodding, Max grinned and motioned at the town.
“Very ready!”
Groaning, Fowl pulled out his weapon and shield.
“Something tells me you’re having too much fun.”

10 Chapter 228 - Pounding Metal

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1789397/chapter-228-pounding-metal 2024-09-06

The fighting had gotten easier by the fourth encounter as the party made their way through the town. Scattered groups of dwarves and goblins were far enough away from others that none joined in during a fight.
“Frozen!”
Max’s shout wasn’t needed, but he said it anyway as ice formed up around the second goblin.
Tanila’s ice spell had encased one of the rifle dwarves and Cordellia’s first shot had hit her target in the face, causing it to drop its weapon while the second goblin tossed a potion at it.
Two dwarf warriors were charging Fowl, both oblivious to Max, who appeared behind the goblin right after it had managed to get the healing potion in the air.

With its head separated and unable to use the potion to enlarge the last rifle user, Max quickly ended the ranged dwarf’s life before working his way through the two popsicles near him.
[8 Dexterity Consumed]
[8 Intelligence Consumed]
[8 Wisdom Consumed]
[8 Dexterity Consumed]
[8 Dexterity Consumed]
[8 Dexterity Consumed]
[8 Intelligence Consumed]
[8 Wisdom Consumed]
[8 Intelligence Consumed]
[8 Wisdom Consumed]
[8 Dexterity Consumed]
[8 Dexterity Consumed]
[4 Dexterity Consumed]
[8 Intelligence Consumed]
[8 Wisdom Consumed]
[8 Intelligence Consumed]
[8 Wisdom Consumed]
[8 Intelligence Consumed]
[8 Wisdom Consumed]
[8 Intelligence Consumed]
[8 Wisdom Consumed]
Max smiled as the stats continued to come in, his dexterity no longer increasing when he killed the ranged dwarves. They were fast and one from the second pack had run away as he chased it until his frozen spell locked it in place.
Dozens of skill notifications about storing power had originally spammed him and were now no longer appearing.
“Save me some warriors!” Max shouted as he turned and saw that once again Fowl and Tanila had taken out the last two.
Fowl’s grin told him everything he needed to know.
“You’re doing that on purpose.”
“Maybe,” Fowl replied. “Regardless, I’m just happy to be able to kill something. Besides, we both know you’re going to get a chance to kill some, eventually. Should I ask how much you’ve gained?”
Max knew Cordellia was out of range as he and Fowl looted the corpses furthest away.
“No… but after we’re done with the tower floor, I’ll tell you then. Only because I know you’ll ask again.”
Chuckling, Fowl nodded, storing the potion belts he pulled free from the goblin.
“How much further till we hit that wall?”
Sighing, Max did some math in his head and easily came up with the answer.
“If nothing changes and the packs stay the same, we’re probably two hours from those walls. I haven’t seen a gate, so I’m not sure if we’ll travel around it and find one or if we’ll need to scale it.”
“That would mean fighting those automatons,” Fowl replied.
“It would.”
Max watched as his friend scowled and shook his head.
“Never a dull moment.”
“Nope. Then again, we didn’t sign up to be tower climbers for a simple life.”
***
“I can’t see a door or gate,” Cordellia said as she stared off at the wall to the right. “We’ve gone a mile, and this thing doesn’t have an opening yet.”
Max nodded, sensing that somewhere had to be a gate or some puzzle that would open one.
“We can cheat and I can get us up the walls. They're only about seventy feet tall.”

“And you’re certain we should fight those creatures up there?”
Nodding, Max motioned to the metal buildings that were behind them.
“We could spend days or weeks trying to go through every house, killing every creature on this floor. The problem is there is no guarantee we could find the mechanism to open a gate if one isn’t around the other side of this city. I’d rather just climb up. We can always use a rope to get down on either side.”
No one argued against it and soon everyone piled upon Max’s shoulders and in his arms as he raced up the metal wall.
Reaching the top, he scanned and found that the nearest automaton was about three hundred yards to the right, slowly moving along the forty foot wide wall. On the other side of where they were was another metal city that led to a courtyard of sorts.
“Is that another tower?” Cordellia said as she peered across the mile of the town that led to the center. “I mean, it looks like one possibly.”
“Like the werewolf floor?” Fowl asked, straining to see what the elf saw, his voice higher than usual.
“Yes.”
Everyone tried to make out the object in the distance, but the truth was it was impossible to know for certain what kind of building it was.
“Let’s focus on the automaton over there,” Max said, pointing at the large metallic monster. “We need to take it down. I’d rather know what we’re getting into and if we can even stop it.”
“What is your plan if we can’t?” Tanila asked.
“If we aren’t able to overpower it with force and spells, we should try to use stone walls to lift a leg off the ground, then use some air and ice walls to keep it off balance before trying to send it over the edge. I mean, if that works, maybe the fall would help take it out.”
Tanila’s frown was the one she showed when she wasn’t certain about his plans, but she nodded anyway.
“If Fowl can hold its attention and not die, I’ll come up from behind and use my one attack, seeing if I can get through its armor.”
“I love when he says that like I’m not here,” their dwarven warrior said. “Almost makes me feel like I’m part of the team.”
Everyone chuckled and started moving toward the dwarven creation from stories, unsure just how well this was going to go.
***
“Go!” Max exclaimed before he stealthed, letting Fowl take the lead.
As they raced toward the twenty foot tall automaton, its waist turned a full one hundred and eighty degrees, its crystal eyes a dark red, locked onto Fowl.
“Intruder! Activating Defense Protocol C! Charging!”
“What does that mean?” Fowl shouted as Max went past him even though he was hidden.
Both red eyes glowed and a buildup of some kind was causing the creature to shake slightly.
Its metal body hummed and gears turned and creaked on the outside as it raised both arms, pointing its palms at Fowl.
A metal plate in each hand slid up, revealing another red gem in each hand that was glowing a bright red.
“SEEEETTTTTTH!!!”
Seeing the sight before him and knowing Fowl was about to be hit with something that might blow the whole wall off for all they knew, Max deactivated his Stealth and raced toward the golem, seeing its head and hands start to track him instead.
Bright red beams came from its eyes and hands, scorching the metal wall and melting it behind Max as he ran toward the automaton.
Its movements were too slow or perhaps Max was too fast, but either way he reached the leg and swung.
[Power Strike]
[Magic Strike]

His weapon streaked through the air, connecting with the metal leg of the golem. Max couldn’t help but smile as he realized that for the first time in a while his strength, combined with the Power Strike, put him well over six hundred. With an idea on the stats for these creatures, he watched as the axe cleaved through the metal like paper, sending out sparks, a spray of different colored liquids and causing the automaton’s leg to creak before buckling, sending it crashing on top of the metal wall.
A loud clang of metal on metal rang out, making Max’s head feel like it was going to pop as the noise assaulted his sonar skill.
It took a few seconds to recover, having dodged the falling automaton and gotten a few yards away. Spinning around, he saw the mechanical monster was no longer sending red beams out, instead, its left arm was attempting to spray the left leg where he had cut it with something from its fingertips.
Foam was covering the broken area, putting out a fire that had ignited.
“Defense Protocol G activated!”
The sound of metal sliding upon metal filled the air, and Max could sense the automaton was rebuilding the broken area of its leg. He wasn’t sure, but it appeared the metal was coming from inside the creature.
Sounds of arrows plinking off the metallic body and ice spears colliding with the mechanical monster did nothing.
A giant boulder appeared above it and Max smiled as he raced toward the fallen automaton’s head, swinging his hammer portion at it.
The clang of metal on metal rang out, and a large metallic hand came near him, trying to swat at him.
More sounds of metal on metal came as Fowl started attacking its side, making the area they were in sound like a blacksmith's shop.
The magical stone boulder fell, striking the automaton in its chest, buckling some of the metal plates that covered it.
Its right arm came up, knocking the boulder free and tried again to swipe at Max with its left hand, who was continually pounding its head, leaving large dents in the metal that appeared to be reinforced.
“Its leg is almost reformed!” Fowl shouted. “What now?”
Using his trump card wasn’t something he wanted to do and Max decided to see if last night's discussion would actually pay off.
Can you refresh my Power Strike?
A half dozen more blows connected, causing one of the metal plates on the head to break free from the others as Max waited to hear a response.
Finally after about two more seconds a notification made him smile.
[Power Strike Cooldown Refreshed]
Without waiting, he set his feet and swung, aiming for the same spot he had hit a dozen times.
[Power Strike]
The hammered portion squished the massive metallic head like a lemon getting hit with a hammer.
A geyser of liquid sprayed out from all around the top of the automaton’s head and the mechanical monster began to shake, its arms twitching in the air.
“Seth?! What did you do?!”
Like a blacksmith with only a single task of pounding metal, Max never answered, instead delivering blow after blow upon the same spot as wires and tubes lay exposed.
Forming an ice spear, Max poured mana into the spell as he continued his assault. When a two-foot gap was created from the twisted and flattened metal, Max sent the spear into the opening, forcing it as deep as possible.
A pealing sound came as both arms fell against the metal wall.
“It’s dead! I just got experience!”
Fowl’s announcement allowed Max a chance to catch his breath and stare at the enemy they had just defeated.

“Start ripping it apart! I want to take back what we can!”
Thank you. I mean it.
Having said what he felt was owed, Max went to work again, pounding and hacking off areas of the automaton’s body, pulling metal sheets free with his bare hands and storing them. Wires, hoses, tubes and more were put into storage and he ripped out both of the massive eight inch red gems the automaton had used for eyes.
“Tell me that was worth it,” Max said when the metal corpse began to dissolve, dropping a dozen red tower experience gems in a neat pile.
“Very much so,” Fowl replied with a grin. “The experience alone was over five or six groups. Though I’m not certain we could have won without you taking out its head. On that note, I’m also wondering why you didn’t use your ability to teleport up to the head and attack it there the first time.”
Groaning, Max realized Fowl was right. He had been an idiot and was so focused on immobilizing the automaton that he went for the leg. If they had to fight another one of these, going for the leg was worthless.
Tanila came up and gave him a nudge, pointing at the city they had yet to enter.
“Looks like we’re about to climb down and see what waits for us there.”
Snorting, Max nodded, grinning like a kid in a candy store. Everything was going well, and he felt amazing.

11 Chapter 229 - Beardless Dwarves https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1790805/chapter-229-beardless-dwarves 2024-09-09

“We’re about four blocks from the center courtyard from what I can tell,” Max informed everyone after he landed back on the street after jumping off a house.
“Maybe one or two more groups, and then we’ll be on the outer edges of everything.”
Fowl was grinning, waiting to hear what Max was going to say next as he shifted from side to side.
“Yes, there is a tower, but I don’t think it's the same thing as the last time. This one is wider, and as you have noticed, taller.”
“Think we’ll have to fight inside it?” Batrire asked.
“I’m not sure, but I hope not. It doesn’t look over forty or fifty yards wide and that might mean going up staircases… having to fight from beneath whatever would be above us… that’s never a good thing if I’m honest.”
Their healer nodded and frowned.
“Might as well get this over with and see what’s waiting for us in the courtyard,” Tanila said. “I’d rather not just stand around. All this metal just feels weird.”
***
The metallic street opened up to the courtyard, which was once again about five hundred yards in diameter. The brick etched pattern in the street turned into a circle that all led toward the tower in the center.
“That’s a pretty big door,” Fowl said as he pointed at the metal gate they could see on one side of the tower. “Who wants to bet how large the thing that will come out of there is going to be?”
No one seemed interested and Max wasn’t paying attention to the discussion, instead he focused on the shift in the road pattern where the street and courtyard met.
“Do you see this?” Max asked as he pointed at the eight inch grooved section that ran the entire length of the street in a long rectangle.
Moving to where it ended, another piece just like it joined, a slight curve that matched the circular courtyard.
“It appears there is something like this around the whole thing,” Tanila said as she studied the area she could see. “Part of the pattern?”

Biting his lip, Max shook his head slowly. Something inside told him that something wasn't right. Getting on his knees, he put the tip of a dagger he pulled from his inventory out and into the groove inside the courtyard.
"Crap… I think I'm right, and this is a trap."
Everyone looked at Max as he stood up, frowning as he studied the courtyard.
"A wall?" Tanila asked.
Nodding, Max pointed at the sections that seemed to run around the entire area.
"At some point I'd bet this is going to rise up and keep us inside the courtyard. I'm not sure how high it will be, but that really makes me wonder what we're going to face inside it."
"And no other place the portal could be?"
Max shook his head at Fowl's question and rubbed his chin for a moment.
"It makes sense the portal would be inside that tower or appear after whatever we face. Even if this isn't the boss floor, we're facing stronger foes now and I'm really not sure what to expect."
"And we're not running back to the exit, are we?" Cordellia asked.
"No, doing so as always sets a terrible precedent and we're going to have to really focus on just being smart. You three stay close enough that Tanila's walls or Batrire's barrier can protect you. Fowl and I'll do what we can with our shields and work on keeping whatever comes away from you all. Worst case if the things go wrong, I'll grab everyone and try to get up and over the wall with my ability to summon air and stone walls and maybe portaling over."
***
An eerie silence came as they began moving across the courtyard. No noise and barely any wind seemed present as the metallic tower got closer and closer.
"Do we knock?" Fowl asked when they were within seventy yards.
The door looked to be about twenty-five feet tall and still hadn't moved.
"You can go bang on it," Max replied, letting himself smile when his dwarven friend shook his head.
As they got within fifty yards, all hell broke loose.
A pair of orange lights emerged from a small section of the wall near the door, flashing as the door shuddered, starting to open.
The section of the courtyard Max had believed was going to box them in did just that. Thick walls rose, climbing higher and higher as they curved upward, quickly reaching a height of about seventy feet, creating an upside-down bowl without a bottom around them.
Another small section of the tower opened up and a large metal megaphone came out of it.
"Intruders! Activating Defense Protocol X, Y & Z!"
Fowl moved closer to the other three, shielding them and looking around frantically as he tried to see what might come.
The metal floor vibrated as loud clanging sounds of metal on metal came out of the darkness of the tower.
Max could sense with his sonar skill something large moving like the automatons, but it felt different. Bigger.
"On the sides!" Tanila shouted.
Glancing at the far ends of the area they were trapped in, two objects were rising from the ground.
"Are those robotic spiders?" Fowl asked. "With a goblin on them?"
"Those appear to have guns on them!" Cordellia shouted as she drew back an arrow and sent it flying at the metallic spider from near max range.
Each of them had eight legs and on two sides were four guns partially behind a metal sheet. Their barrels were sticking out and in the middle of the spider's back, in what had to be a seat, sat a goblin, moving levers.
As those two started to move a giant metal creature came from inside, covered in spikes along its arms and shoulders while a huge spiked metal ball connected to a chain that attached to the end of its left arm rested in the automaton's right hand.

“There’s a dwarf in the thing's head!” Cordellia yelled out, still sending arrows at the spider creature on the right, watching her arrows bounce off a shield of some kind, causing no damage.
“Ice shield the flanks!” Max yelled as he saw that there was a glass area in the automaton’s head. Behind it was a dwarf with no facial hair, wearing goggles and grinning like he was about to have the time of his life.
The massive ball fell to the ground, clanging against metal as the one foot spikes on it caused it to roll for a moment.
“I’ve got our women!” Fowl shouted as he moved to get closer to the group of three.
Max nodded, pulling a potion out and tossing it at his dwarven friend.
Fowl roared and in moments stood almost ten feet tall, his shield now creating a much larger area of protection for his friends to hide behind.
Still moving, Max cast his ice wall on the right of his friends and raced toward the creature that had to be the rare spawn of this floor.
Faster than he had expected, the boss flicked its massive metal left arm and the spiked weapon raced toward him, four solid feet of metal death coming at him.
From the corner of his vision as he lept and rolled right, getting to his feet and reaching the boss, Max saw Tanila had summoned her ice cloud above the spider to their right.
Ignoring it and the other, he focused on the leg that was before him, swinging his weapon, hammer side out.
An inch from impact a shimmer came and his weapon bounced off of some barrier.
The spiked ball came toward him as the automaton’s waist twisted, its feet never moving, causing the attached weapon to snap toward Max.
Instantly, his shield was in his hand and the impact came, sending him tumbling to the right, rolling across the metal floor.
[Regeneration]
The hit hurt a little bit, not enough to really do much damage as his natural constitution was so high now that his body had become more resistant to damage.
I guess I owe you more than I realized for how many stats I have consumed over these last few months.
Grinning, Max raced back toward the boss, dodging the spiked ball that came at him again and moved between the large legs, swinging over and over as he attempted to see how long the barrier might hold up.
The sounds of gunfire came from the left and Max saw the metal spider was firing a shot about every second. Each time, a different gun sent one hurtling towards the others.
Fowl was blocking the shots easily with his new larger shield. The ice walls were already gone on that side, having been blown apart by the barrage of attacks.
Dodging left, Max’s sonar informed him of the boss’s attempt to kick him, none of his attacks doing anything yet.
Stowing his weapon, Max moved backward and began casting a ball of lightning. He hadn’t used it yet, but Tanila had told him how it worked. With nothing else to do, he attempted to grab onto the leg of the boss, trying to see if he could push himself past the shield like he had with the rare lizard spawn on the first floor of the tower.
Moving constantly and trying to keep his hands on the boss, he couldn’t push through and knew after a few seconds this was something different.
By then the ball of lighting was fully formed, three feet in diameter, and Max sent it upward into the metal undercarriage of the boss. The smell of something burning came a few moments later and the way the boss had been spinning its midsection slowed down.
“Lightning that spider!” Max shouted.
Punching the metal side of the boss’s leg, Max saw that the barrier seemed less bright and didn’t feel as absolute as it had before.
Charging another lighting attack, Max easily dodged the leg that tried to kick him.

The boss moved backward, the weapon attached to its arm coming between its own legs, and Max almost laughed, moving sideways and sending the bolt of lightning into the boss's underside again.
A flash of light came from around the boss and then a popping sound was heard. Throwing another punch, his hand connected against the metal, nothing preventing his attack. Without hesitating, Max raced from underneath, pulling his halberd out.
Fowl had been right. He had been an idiot against the first automaton they fought on the wall. Going for the leg instead of the head had been a poor choice of skill use and had they not practiced that fight, he might have wasted the skills here.
Now he appeared above the boss's head, coming down as his hammer glowed, ready to end this.
[Demonic Teleportation]
[Power Strike]
[Magical Strike]
The sound of metal breaking and shattering came and Max saw the carnage that erupted from beneath him.
Two unexpected things happened as his hammer struck the top part of the boss. First, the head of the hammer traveled all the way through the metal head, going down to the base of the shoulders. The large dome-like head was almost split in two from his attack.
The second thing was the cold sensation that came rushing through him. His weapon was lodged in the metal and holding onto it kept him upright.
[10 Intelligence Consumed]
[10 Wisdom Consumed]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [Engineering & Tinkering Mastery]?]
[Yes / No]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [Power Core Crafting]?]
[Yes / No]
Those notifications gave Max pause as he ripped his weapon free and turned to see what the others were up too.
Max saw Tanila had destroyed both of the other monsters, her magic having done far more damage than he realized against them.
Max tried to pull his weapon free, the boss began to fall forward, giving him a ride as he stood tall on its shoulders.
The crashing sound echoed in the dome they were trapped in. When the boss finally came to a rest, Max yanked his weapon free.
"What do we loot?!" Fowl shouted as he raced toward the fallen boss.
He didn't have a clue as Max tried to guess at what might even be salvageable. Hacking through the metal wasn't going to be an option, and anything worthwhile had to be inside the protective armor.
"Don't bother! I don't think we can get anything from it!"
Jumping down, he avoided the fluid and blood that was oozing from where the boss's head was, smiling at Tanila who was grinning.
"Nice work with the two spiders. Makes me feel like I should have let you clear everything."
Their mage rolled her eyes at him, and Max felt the body of the boss dissolving into nothingness with his sonar skill.
"Anything?" Tanila whispered as she got close, giving him a kiss on his cheeks.
Nodding slowly, he grinned.
"Give me a second and let me see what they do."
Choosing yes to the first, Max's mind was overwhelmed at the knowledge that flooded through it. Even with his Formidable Mind skill, this time it hurt in ways he had never experienced before. Learning magic had been painful, but he had known about it. Getting mastery in weapons and even learning to craft wasn't like this.
Now his mind was ravaged by things Max had never considered a possibility.

Suddenly there was so much potential in the world.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Hey All - Sorry if it feels like I'm afk a bit.

Got back from dragoncon (had a blast), ended up with covid. Been stuck in bed for 2 days (wow it kicked my arse).

Finally up and kind of back to 'normal'

I wanted to say thanks again for supporting me! UL1 book 4 did real well on Amazon! 2 more months and book 5 hits! then again... book 6! Writing book 7 atm.

Also got a new story in works (Outside of UL1 & my Viking series)!

12 Chapter 230 - Where It All Goes

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1795173/chapter-230-where-it-all-goes 2024-09-11

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Vainglory [LitRPG, Progression Fantasy]

Dive into an adventure where the line between hero and villain blurs, and the cost of survival may be more than you bargain for.

In the rain-soaked streets of Seattle, Ward Dyer, a seasoned Port Authority detective, finds himself entangled in a case that defies reality. His latest stakeout on a suspected human trafficker leads him to the eerie, forgotten tunnels of the Seattle underground—a place where shadows whisper and danger lurks.

In a heart-stopping encounter, Ward disrupts a human sacrifice, but the victory leaves him gravely wounded and teetering on the brink of death. He's approached by a mysterious young woman with an offer he can't refuse. In exchange for a cryptic price, she saves him—sending him to Vainglory, a system of worlds where magic intertwines with the unknown and mysteries unravel in the darkest corners.

Now, with a devilish presence haunting his thoughts, Ward embarks on the Vainglory Challenges—a perilous quest for power, riches, and the elusive secrets that may hold the key to his salvation—or his undoing.

Chapter 230 - Where It All Goes

[Skill Description - Engineering & Tinkering Mastery]
*****
Engineering & Tinkering Mastery - Epic Skill: This skill provides mastery of all crafting related to automaton, power core weapon creation as well as robotics. The crafter will be able to make all components required to build and give life to their creations when possible. Advanced materials will result in higher quality creations. When crafting Tier A objects, there is a 5% chance for a bonus trait or skill to be granted. When crafting power core weapons, there is a thirty-five percent chance that bonus stats may be granted to the weapon. Weapons may have up to two power cores.
*****
What the hell is all this?!
A skill this world shouldn't have. Do not reveal it for now. We can discuss it later.
There was a tone to the words Max had just heard in his mind. It mimicked the tone when they found those items required to make an artifact. Whatever he had just gained must be awfully dangerous if he received this warning.
"Seth?"
Everyone was looking at him, eyes narrowed and waiting to see what was going on.
"Sorry, a bit tired all of a sudden," he lied.
Blinking a few times and then forcing a yawn, he smiled as the others copied his action.
"Cordellia, do you want to open the chest?" Max asked as he sensed its appearance.
Their ranger grinned and moved toward the metal chest, excited to be the one that got to open it.
"You ok?" Tanila asked as she came up next to him.
Frowning, he nodded.
"When we get back, I'll tell you."
She smiled, and they moved to join the other elf in their party who was standing by the raid sized chest. Two robotic spiders and a large robot with a ball and chain weapon were cut out of metal, etched with details and stuck to the side of the chest.
Their ranger lifted the lid and a high pitch squeal came from her.
Her outburst caused everyone else to move a little quicker to peer inside.
"Holy elf tits," Fowl muttered as he saw what awaited the team.
Two metal belts, one thicker and wider, waited for Fowl and Batrire. A pair of bracers with etchings were locked for Cordellia and rust-colored pair of cloth like pants were for Tanila. Next to them was a pair of chain pants for Max. Two random items were waiting, both rings. Four massive red crystals finished off the loot.
Fowl didn't hesitate, grabbing his belt and pulling it out. It had a rune that looked dwarven, but Max couldn't place it.
"Good gods, this is amazing," Fowl muttered as it swapped out with his old one.
"Are you going to tell us?" Max asked and Fowl shook his head, winking at him.
Batrire groaned and retrieved her's, a smile appearing as she found out what it held.
Cordellia had her bracers a moment later and let out another squeal, slipping the leather and metal worked rust colored bracers on her forearms.
Sighing, Tanila took her pants and upon inspecting them, her eyes widened some, and she grinned, giving Max a wink.
"You're all a bunch of bastards," Max said with a sigh as they all stood there smiling and waiting for him to inspect his new pants.
The chain felt light and thin but the moment he held it, Max knew it was much stronger than it appeared.
[*Inspect Pants*]
*****
Crazed Crafter Chain
+25 Strength, Constitution
+25% movement bonus
Bonded

*****
Equipping his and giving a quick twirl to show them off, Max chuckled as Fowl whistled.
“Twenty or twenty-five?”
“I got twenty on two stats,” Fowl replied. “I’m guessing yours are twenty-five if you asked.”
Shrugging, Max winked and ignored his friend’s playful scowl.
“So, who gets a turn on these?” Max asked.
“It’s you, me and Tanila,” Fowl replied immediately.
Shaking his head, Max reached in and grabbed the four crystals.
“You two can have them. I’ll wait for the next one.”
Both nodded and soon each held a small metal ring with some runes etched on them, each sliding them on and smiling.
“I guess we’re done here. Time to explore that tower?” Tanila asked.
As they made their way through the door, lights turned on and a warehouse of so many different boxes and metal parts lined the walls. A few shelves with objects on them were near a back area with what Max recognized as tools for the creation of things with his new skill.
In the middle of the room was a portal waiting to be taken when done.
“Are we going to loot all this?” Fowl asked as he began inspecting crates, finding that some were empty while others had random metal pieces in them.
Max nodded, his mind telling him what parts he could use for something with his new skill.
The notification on the last skill waited and selecting yes. New knowledge filled his brain.
*****
Power Core Crafting- Epic Skill: The user may craft power cores from power crystals. These fusions will enable automatons, robotic creations and power core charged weapons to function. The quality of the power core will determine the possible power output. Advanced materials impact the creation rarity. There is a 10% chance to increase power output of core by 50%.
*****
Almost immediately Max saw parts that he would have ignored before and now knew they were usable for the power core creation. The knowledge that the red crystals he was holding were the items needed for creating a power core created a few questions and some possible answers for what exactly Everett and other Factions were using them for.
“How much of this can we actually carry back?” Tanila asked as she started picking up random pieces before setting them back on the shelf she was next to.
“We’ll take it all. Some will be useful and others won’t, but we can figure that out later,” Max replied.
The next thirty minutes were spent stripping the room clean and soon only bare shelves and empty boxes remained.
***
“Can you believe this?” Tom asked as he held the gun Max had given them, inspecting for a third or fourth time. “What would the dwarven kingdom think if they saw us holding one?”
“I’d get a letter asking me to return it,” Everett replied, grunting afterwards as he frowned. “The King would like to believe they have a claim to all of them, especially since they no longer produce those anymore.”
Max and Tanila smiled as they sat on the couch, watching the pair who were still struggling to believe that they had a fabled gun from old in their possession.
“At the end of the day, you can decide what to do with it,” Max said. “I’ve still got one and am not planning on sharing it or making it common knowledge that I possess it.”
Nodding, their leader looked over the list of items they had turned in downstairs.
“You realize most of this stuff no one inside our Faction really knows how to use?”

Knowing what needed to happen next, Tanila stood up and stretched.
“Tom, can you help me get better at a spell I used today? I don’t do a lot with lightning and it felt hard to control.”
Their trainer’s eyes widened as he snorted and then bobbed his head once.
“I’ll do what I can, but know that very few are skilled with lightning, which means my experience with it won’t be as strong as the others.”
Laughing, Tanila nodded and smiled as they moved toward the door.
“And yet I’m sure you’ll still teach me things that will help,” she replied as they left.
Everett had a slight frown as he watched the pair go, knowing Max needed them to be alone.
“So, time for brass tacks?”
Bobbing his head, Max nodded and began pulling out a few unique items and set them on the table.
“We talked about being honest and so I’m going to reveal a few more things that most of the time I probably wouldn’t. I picked up two new skills and I’m not sure they should be put to use.”
Max pointed at the silver metallic orb he had set down on the table. A second passed and Max pulled out the red crystal he had kept for himself.
The frown on Everett’s face grew larger as the crystal sat next to the orb.
“These are used to create power cores which can power that gun you now possess, as well as automatons and other robotic devices. I know we have never really talked about what the crystals do for the Faction but with my knowledge of the kind of power this has inside it, I need to ask a few things.”
The Faction leader shifted in his seat on the couch and gave a curt nod.
“What exactly does a crystal like this provide for the Faction?”
Grunting, Everett took a deep breath as he scooted to the edge of the couch and sighed.
Slowly, crystals began to appear in his hand, each one being set down on the table in a straight line.
“Yellow, green, red, orange, purple and clear. As you can guess, this is the order for a crystal dropped by bosses from floor one to fifty. Each one increases in power and has an immense value the higher they are.”
Tapping the red one with his finger, Everett held up three on his other hand.
“The power in the red crystal is three times more than the green one and thus nine times more than the yellow one. As you might guess, that pattern stays the same through the purple crystal but this clear one is ten times more powerful than the purple one.”
Max nodded, his eyes somehow able to sense and see the power of each crystal with his new skill. Inside his mind was a variety of thoughts and ideas on how to use them for different things. So many schematics of guns, and automatons seemed possible as the crystal power increased.
“Each Faction has a crystal at the heart of our home. It has an ability that only the Faction leader and co-leader can access, allowing us to *feed* the Faction crystal with these. Each crystal can only be fed once every other day regardless of color. So I can give it five different colored crystals today but I cannot feed it any of the same color for another forty eight hours. Do you follow?”
Nodding, Max took his items back and stored them, waiting for Everett to continue.
“You might wonder why I have these higher level ones and haven’t fed them yet,” the older man said with a slight smirk. “The truth is most Factions won’t absorb them, instead keeping them locked away until someone has a need for the power. It hasn’t happened in a while but there have been a few adventurers over the life of Factions who operated on the principle of *forgiveness rather than permission* . They upgraded a skill beyond what they were approved for and took precious resources away from the Faction. You can only imagine the kind of problems caused in the past when someone upgraded a skill or two to legendary without permission.”
Unable to help himself, Max started to chuckle as he nodded.
“I can imagine that conversation wouldn’t go well afterward.”

“No, it never does,” Everett replied. “As far as your question, those crystals are not as common as you and your group continue to bring us. In the short span of your time in our Faction we have gained more power than you can imagine. Some of our higher level tower climbers have been given chances they might normally not get for a few more years because of you all.
“Back to your original question. Those crystals represent power and strength. Being able to grant and provide skills increases to one's members helps them continue to grow stronger. Tell me, do you know what our two highest groups do in the tower now?”
Seeing Max shake his head, Everett cleared his throat.
“They farm the level forties and occasionally help those who are potentially strong enough to advance to the same stages. None of them are able to bridge the gap to the fifty-first tower floor. There is a massive increase in the monster strength. So they hope for crystals and gems.”
“Even the ones who have sold all their levels and ground out the bonuses again?”
Everett nodded and stood up, moving to the bookshelf behind his desk and activating the same secret storage area that was hidden.
Pulling a chest from the storage, Everett set it down on his desk, opened it and started putting large pouches on his desk.
“Look in here.”
Max got up and upon opening the pouches found each one filled with different colored gems from the tower floor.
“You could easily level someone up with these!” Max exclaimed.
“I do occasionally but only when they hit a bottleneck. The truth is these are saved for those who reach the fiftieth floor, helping them get back to farming faster. My hope is that one day you and your party will get to use these.”
Turning and pointing to the five large crystals still on the small table, Everett paused and pulled out a giant blue crystal. Power radiated from it and Max could feel and understand this one was way stronger than the clear one.
“I only have one of these. It’s been in the Faction storage for longer than anyone knows. When the time comes and you earn the right for your party to get a legendary ranked skill, this will be what is required.”
Both of them stood there in silence for a moment, taking in the power of the foot long blue crystal resting on Everett’s hand.
“So now comes the real question,” Max said. “Do we want me to try and build things with my two new skills or do you agree that for now we should keep it hidden?”
Putting the stuff he had pulled out away, the older man said nothing, his jaw muscles moving as the man considered the options before him.
“Not right now. When you hit the fiftieth floor we can talk about it then. Until then, I would suggest keeping it a secret.”
Max nodded and grinned.
“Any other secrets you want to share?”
“Nothing at the moment but I’m certain in time there will be. For now we’ll need to recover and then hit the next floor. I’m really not excited about what must be coming on the twenty-fifth floor. Everything is looking rather unpleasant.”
Roaring with laughter, Everett shook his head as he put his hands on his hips.
“Says the adventurer that is stronger than almost everyone else.”
Grinning, Max held out his hand and after shaking the older man’s, turned and moved toward the door.
“I better go see what Tanila is learning. Something tells me Tom is going to still have a few tricks up his sleeves.”

13 Chapter 231 - Conflict Inside

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1796810/chapter-231-conflict-inside 2024-09-11

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

When the President said to immerse ourselves in the project, this was NOT what I had in mind!

I really should've taken the publisher's employment contract more seriously...

Rachel and her best friend Nora never imagined their first job at a publishing company would catapult them into the heart of their favorite fantasy web novel. Five years after the story's abrupt hiatus left fans in limbo, they seized the chance to help the

enigmatic author complete the tale that had captivated their hearts during their high school days. But what begins as an exciting creative endeavor quickly spirals into a quirky, unimaginable adventure when they're whisked away without consent into the very story they longed to save. Now, the two will get firsthand experience dealing with the destructive demon lord who betrayed and banished the heroine during the story's original cliffhanger.

But what if he isn't the card-carrying villain everyone else seems to think he is?

In Book 2, Holy Order of Gold, the hero's party, now reunited, learns to work together again as they journey towards the Holy City of Chairo.

Tags: Satire, Comedy, Fantasy, Romance, Female Lead, Magic, Portal Fantasy / Isekai, Progression, Reincarnation

//A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES END

Chapter 231 - Conflict Inside

“So now you possess the crafting skill every dwarf wishes they could have,” Fowl muttered as he turned his mug slowly in his hands. “And your stats are beyond broken. Does anyone know what bonuses a human gets for a natural two hundred and fifty stat?”

Everyone turned their attention to Tanila who rolled her eyes at them.

“I only know of what they get for intelligence, not for any of the other stats.”

“Wait! Fowl’s not messing with me?” Max asked, confused to learn something new.

Clearing her throat, their mage took a drink from her cup and shook her head.

“He isn’t. The truth is most never hit a natural stat of two hundred and fifty. Each race has a different bonus but for intelligence my race gets one at two hundred and fifty. The perk is called *A Sharp Mind* and adds damage to spells and increases mana regeneration. Only those who reach the upper levels of the tower ever reach those numbers.”

“Not even royalty?” Max asked.

Tanila shook her head.

“Everything has to come naturally, without any modifiers. Just like our dwarven warrior over there has a natural bonus to constitution and health, his ability to acquire a two hundred and fifty in that stat would require him being weak minded, slower and not as strong. Sure items can help with those but for most of the tower he has to give up a lot of stats to reach that point.”

“Which is why when you always make fun of me for having a low intelligence doesn’t help,” Fowl complained. “If I want that bonus, I have to sacrifice everything for it.”

Max considered that as he glanced at his stats again.

[Base Stat Only Check]

*****

STR: 221

DEX: 220

CON: 224

INT: 225

WIS: 225

*****

Tanila had given him the middle finger when he had told her about his new intelligence but Fowl and Batrire had seemingly taken in all the information without much reaction.

“Those goblins were worth a ton of intelligence and wisdom. For so long I was lacking in them. I think that’s why my lightning spell did so much,” Max said. “If my math is right I’ll find out in the next ten floors what a natural two hundred and fifty looks like.”
Grunting once, Fowl lifted his cup to his lips and finished off his drink.
“May the gods not shite themselves the day they run into you,” his dwarven friend replied.
***
“Two more!” Max shouted as a pair of beetles popped out from underneath the soil up at the three who were standing on top of a stone wall.
The fighting had been fierce as the dungeon was a set of enormous caverns filled with bugs that exploded upon death.
Max sent an empowered shot with his bow, causing the one that was crawling up the tunnel to explode in a fireball.
“Freezing!” Tanila yelled as she froze the first beetle that appeared, ice surrounding the four foot long bug.
Max did the same on the second, seeing both were the ones that had green dots that signified a poison gas would appear upon their demise.
“Get them, I got this one!” Fowl called out as he brained the chitin shell of the beetle trying to get through the dwarf’s defenses. Its long red mandibles clamped down on the shield but couldn’t rip it free from Fowl’s grip.
“Tossing these! Then shoot them!”
Max moved to where the one Tanila had frozen was and grabbed it, freeing it completely from the ground and tossed it back up the tunnel where they had come.
Arrows began to pelt the soft underside as it flew through the air and the monster exploded before it hit the ground, sending up a gas cloud twenty yards from them.
An explosion from where Fowl was signaled he had defeated his opponent.
“You’re up!” Max said, grinning at Tanila as he lifted the last beetle and waited for her ice spear to form. Tossing it down the tunnel he watched as she skewered it mid flight and caused another explosion, more gas filling up the fifteen meter wide tunnel.
“Man these are a pain in the arse,” Fowl said. “Who in their right mind makes up bugs that blow up when they die?”
Snorting, Max nodded and remembered the joys of the first pair that blew up near him and Fowl, green gas burning both of them. The worse was when they breathed it in, their lungs feeling like someone was twisting a knife inside.
Four hours of consistent fighting had brought them deeper and deeper into the tunnel system and only the green and blue moss that grew on the walls provided light. An eerie glow from the two colors made things like their armor and weapons shimmer as they moved.
“Tell me how this stuff isn’t going to make me upset,” Fowl muttered as he watched Max move to another lava trap and broke the ground over it.
A section of dirt started to fall downward, plunging ten feet into a pocket of boiling magma that was hidden by normal looking soil. Only when weight was put on the top soil did it crumble and fall.
“I’m just glad I can sense these,” Max said as he motioned ahead and to the right. “There is another about twenty yards up there. Falling into one of these wouldn’t be fun at all.”
“Imagine my beard then,” Fowl replied. “Burnt off in an instant.”
“I guess then you’d look like those beardless dwarves from the last floor,” Max teased as he moved to activate the next trap. “Nothing like a bald dwarf all over.”
***
Ten more hours of slow grinding through the tower floor brought the team to the exit, ending an otherwise uneventful experience.
“No stats?” Fowl asked after the other three had used the portal.
Shaking his head, Max shrugged.

“It happens that way after a boss usually. They're stronger than the rest so depending on what they give, it may be a floor or two before that stat gives me another boost.”
Snorting, Fowl fixed his beard and nodded.
“Still, knowing you're close to achieving what only a handful of heroes has ever done is unbelievable. That alone makes me wonder what you’re going to be like as we get closer to the top end of the tower.”
Max nodded and pointed at the portal.
“I know, but I’m also worried about this jump everyone talks about. Something about it feels dangerous and I’m not excited to see exactly what.”
The moment his foot touched the stone tiles outside the tower, Max felt the same wave of anger and displeasure come over him.
As his eyes adjusted and his sonar attempted to find what it was he was feeling, Max couldn’t figure out where it was coming from.
“Everything okay?” Tanila asked as she saw his face.
Frowning Max slowly shook his head.
“It’s there… that same presence. Something is off.”
The others had moved away from the portal exit and Max continued to scan the area, sensing the eyes of something on him.
“Let’s worry about it later. For now–”
A scream followed by the arrival of people spilling out behind him got his and everyone else's attention.
Two members he recognized from Dexic’s group came tumbling out of the portal, both of them bleeding and one he recognized as an archer missing his left arm from the elbow down. Two arrows were sticking out of what had to be their elf mage’s back.
“HEAL!” Max shouted, his weapon in hand as he raced toward the two, pulling a healing potion out as well.
The guards raced over and Max saw both of them coming with weapons in hand, one holding their finger with a communication ring to their face, calling for assistance.
“We’re here!” Max exclaimed as he caught the stumbling archer, lifting the potion to his lips and giving it to the man. “What happened?!”
Fighting… inside… ambushed.”
His words stopped as he greedily drank the healing potion, the blood flow stopping immediately as the wound on his arm closed over.
“Dexic?”
Wincing, the man motioned to the portal.
“She stayed, fought against the group, buying us time.”
“What floor?” the male guard who arrived asked.
“Forty second.”
His eyes saw Tanila and Cordellia and he winced.
“Elves… they said the rare spawn was theirs, even though we were fighting it. They took it after killing our healer. Dexic saved us… took out one of theirs and brought us near the portal. They caught up, so she… she sent us here.”
Max felt his blood boiling and turned to the guard who was standing near him.
“Can’t you go and help?!”
Sighing, the guard shook his head.
“Tower business isn’t our job. We keep people out who aren’t strong enough. What goes inside is–”
“People are dying!” Max shouted, standing and getting into the guard's personal space. “Surely you can go in there and–”
“He can’t! His level won’t allow it!”
Max spun around, seeing the other guard and know it was her from the start.
“We are specifically unable to go in. Even though we’re level fifty, we do not climb the tower.”
“Then what can we do?”
The guard winced as she saw Max’s face and the pained expression he displayed.

“Hope your friend makes it out.”
“And if the ones that come out are flagged?” Max asked, his nostrils flaring as he breathed heavily.
“You would not be allowed to attack them. The guard has been summoned. They will defend the tower climbers. If you were to try and attack…” her voice trailed off, seeing the malice intent in Max’s eyes. “You would have to fight the entire guard and I do not think that would go well for you.”
Laughter came from inside Max’s head and he had to suppress the urge in this moment that was present.
Oh, but what a mistake they would make by angering you. Stay out of this for now. As much as I would desire to drink the blood of those foolish enough to stand in our way, we have agreed to help each other and you are not ready nor truly desire this path right now.
The truth of his skill saying those words made him wince and Max saw the guard nod.
She probably thinks I see the reason behind her statement.
No reply came and Max took a deep breath, letting it out as he felt Tanila put her hand on his shoulder.
“What do you want to do?”
Max frowned, still feeling the sensation of being watched and upset by it and what was before him.
“You four take them to our Faction house. I’ll stay here just in case Dexic makes it.”
“Is that wise?”
Shaking his head, Max glanced at Fowl and snorted.
“You and I both know if she makes it I’m the only one who can stop her from getting in more trouble.”
Grunting, Fowl nodded and held a hand out to the human mage, leading her toward the carriages.
“I’ll be waiting for you. Don’t do anything stupid,” Tanila said as she kissed her fingers and then pressed the tips against his lips.
“Only because you asked,” Max replied as he turned back toward the portal. “Tell Everett I’m here. He’ll know what to do.”
***
Two minutes later a group of guards and wagons came racing toward the tower and stopped as close as possible to the path that led to the tower.
Twenty plus guards moved quickly to where he was standing and an older man moved to where the two toward guards were waiting.
“What level?”
His tone reminded Max of a time he had gotten in trouble and his father had spoken like that. Nothing but a simple reply was desired, and that was exactly what the man got.
“Forty two.”
Grunting, the older guard turned and gave Max an appraising look, his blue eyes taking in the man before him.
“Party member?”
“Faction member. Seth Pendal of the Golden Axe sir.”
“Ogre nuts,” the man replied, snorting afterwards. “I wish I didn’t know your name but I do. What is it with you and everyone seeming to hate you?”
Max shrugged and pointed toward the portal.
“I don’t think or I sure hope this had nothing to do with my problems, sir. Should I ask how you know my name?”
“I have a captain, Vella, and our conversations have been very interesting over the last few months, to say the least. I’m Major Greyson. Not much gets me out of my office except moments like these. Tell me, what do you know?”
The male tower guard started to open his mouth but the Major turned and gave the man a glare, cutting him off.
“My Faction member said there was a dispute about a rare spawn. A group of elves ambushed them. I know the healer in their squad is dead and most likely the other

warrior as well. Dexic stayed behind to help them escape. She also managed to kill one of their attackers.”
Spitting, Major Greyson nodded and frowned.
“All we can do now is wait but I’m assuming you know the rules.”
“About not attacking?”
Chuckling the man nodded, crossing his arms and moving to stand beside Max, towering over him by a whole foot.
“I have no doubt you’re strong but trust me, this isn’t the way to handle this.”

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

HTTPS://WWW.ROYALROAD.COM/FICTION/92366/DUNGEON-CORE-BABY-A-DUNGEON-CORE-ADVENTURE-LITRPG

DUNGEON CORE BABY
KANE DRAKE
Dungeon Core Baby [A Dungeon Core Adventure LitRPG]
Everyone loves babies. Everyone hates dungeons. Problem is, Charlie's somewhere in between.
The Kingdom of Aysela is rebuilding, still recovering a decade after an otherworldly hero saved them from an ancient threat. But there are whispers now that the fight isn't over. When an order of knights attempt to summon the hero back to their world, they instead encounter something unexpected. A baby.
After swallowing a dungeon core and being transported to another world, a dirty diaper is suddenly the least of Charlie's problems. He's forced to seek out the only person who can explain his strange new circumstances and finds unlikely allies along the way. But everywhere he crawls, he faces new obstacles: crazy cultists, self-righteous knights, and the growing pains that come with his new dungeon related-powers. All while trying not to miss nap time.
Dungeon Core Baby is an adventure story with a dungeon based progression system and class. While there are dungeon core elements (he will explore and build his own dungeon over time) do not expect a traditional dungeon core story. Monster evolution, dungeon building, and exploring a unique power system are all just rungs on the ladder to OP. These elements will be introduced over time, as Charlie discovers new abilities.
Daily Updates!
80,000 words already written.
What to expect:
-Baby MC with a dungeon-based class system. (Dungeon Manipulation, Traps, Monsters & Minions)
-Skill based-progression. (No stats)
-Strength progression from literal baby to the strongest.
-A growing world where the MC is not the only character who progresses.
-No harem elements. (Unless you include people adoring a cute baby. There's lots of that)

Chapter 232 - A Dangerous Challenge

The sun had just set and the light stones were blazing brightly against the tower and on some stands nearby.
Max was moving the moment he saw the golden armor appear at the location everyone came from the Tower.
Dexic was staggering, blood dripping from her sword and from all over her armor.

“Dexic!” Max shouted as he drew close to her, seeing her eyes trying to focus as her weapon came up in his direction.
“It’s Seth! You’re safe!”
As if his words had cut ropes keeping her upright, Dexic fell toward the ground, caught in his arms before she had.
“Drink this,” Max said as he handed her the potion he had been waiting to use this entire time. His finger had already popped the cork and was at her lips, forcing the liquid into her.
She choked once before she managed to swallow the healing potion.
After it did its job, Dexic glanced at Max and then at the guards who were moving to surround her.
“Did anyone make it?”
“An archer and a mage,” Max replied. “No one else.”
She nodded slowly and then stood up on her own power.
“Major.”
The older man frowned and nodded at her.
“Are they still alive?”
“Three are,” the golden clad woman replied. “Two of them won’t be making it back anytime soon. I would have ended more of them, but the odds were not in my favor.”
Smacking his lips, the Major turned toward his soldiers and motioned toward Dexic with his head.
“They’ll take you to the usual place for a few days. I’ll notify Everett of our report. Anything else I need to know?”
Max watched as something that had obviously happened before between these two played out before him.
She shook her head and stored her weapon.
“If they come out and are still flagged you best make sure I don’t know where because I’m going to end their lives one way or another.”
Her tone was like running a file against metal.
Turning her attention toward Max, Dexic sighed as she frowned at him.
“This might blow back on you and the rest of the Faction. Let Everett know I’m sorry.”
“No matter what, I’ll be by your side,” Max replied, holding out his hand.
She shook it and nodded.
“Be careful with that statement. You might find yourself surrounded one day because of it.”
Shrugging, Max motioned to the tower.
“You’re part of my family. That means I’ll defend you no matter what.”
Chuckling, he didn’t flinch when she slapped his shoulder one time.
The force of the blow would have killed a normal person, and probably anyone below level fifty. An echo of the impact reverberated through the courtyard.
Dexic chuckled, and Max grinned.
“Damn, I forgot just how strong you are,” she said. “Now if you will excuse me, Major Greyson has somewhere I’ll need to go.”
She left with five guards, not acting like she was doing anything different from a normal night, riding around town when most people were fast asleep.
As she left, Max turned to the Major who was frowning again.
“Not her first time I take it?”
Shaking his head he chuckled.
“No, and one day I expect you and I to have this same conversation. After the thirty-fifth floor it’s not uncommon for some fights to break out in the tower. The real problem arises when someone survives.”
“Because of the grievances?”
“Pretty smart for a warrior type,” Major Greyson replied. “If a group dies in the tower, no one knows why. Yet when stuff like this happens, blood is going to be required. Next week the Colosseum will have another night and I don’t doubt for a moment that she’ll be there, ready to kill someone.”

He gave a quick whistle and held up three fingers.
Six guards moved to encircle the platform where everyone came out of the tower.
“I’m going to bed. These men will see to whoever comes out. I suggest you go home. Odds are they won’t return before their aura wears off.”
***
Everett and Tom both glared at Max who stood before the pair.
“She didn’t say what Faction did this did she?”
Shaking his head, Max didn’t feel he needed to ask, but apparently he should have.
“It’s because she wants us to wait for the report,” Tom replied. “We both know how hot of a head you can have in these moments.”
Glaring at his friend, Everett’s fingers twitched and for a moment Max wondered if he was about to see the man lose his cool.
Two deep breaths later, the throbbing vein on the Faction leader's forehead was no longer looking ready to burst as his fingers drummed against the desk.
“Thank you again for helping Cressida and Fletcher. They were in bad shape from what I hear.”
Max nodded and wanted to ask about the arm and being able to regrow it but felt now wasn’t the time to discuss such a difficult topic.
“The fight in the Colosseum that apparently is going to take place. What is Dexic going to do?”
Both men frowned at that question, each looking at the other before turning their attention back to Max.
“The problem is she can challenge and I have no doubt they will accept,” Tom replied. “Who they send will be the real problem. It can be anyone, and while Dexic is strong, she isn’t the strongest.”
“You mean she might die because they send a higher level climber?” Max asked, his eyes widening at the thought of that.
“It is considered bad taste, but yes, that is most likely what will happen,” Tom answered. “At this level the risk of losing someone is too much to undertake. I have no doubt there will be many who will take this moment to see our Faction become weaker. There is a reason most of this is settled inside higher floors. Where rules are loose and people can get revenge on more than just one person.”
Stroking his chin, Max considered that knowledge and knew that Tanila, along with Batrire, wasn’t going to like his next question.
“Can I fight alongside Dexic when she challenges them?”
“Uhhh….” Tom’s voice held that word for a few seconds, wincing when he stopped and glanced at Everett who was smirking. “You could, but you do realize I just told you that there might be someone who has beat the fiftieth floor inside there? Could you really–”
“If I’m allowed to, I want to,” Max answered, cutting off Tom. “Eleven days till the Colosseum is active. A few more days for her fight if you push it to the end. That gives me time to get a little stronger and help her.”
“Everett, tell this man he’s being an idiot!”
Rising from his chair, the Faction leader held out his hand and grinned.
“I’ll tell her your plan, Seth. Ignore Tom and go get some sleep. I have no doubt you’ll be busy in the coming week.”
Tom started to sputter and Max turned, leaving the older man motioning at him while looking at Everett.
When the door shut, Tom roared, anger radiating from him.
“You would toss him away?! Just like that?! Do you have any idea what he can become?!”
Everett sighed, sitting down and crossing his arms as he nodded.
“I do. Trust me, I don’t want this to be the way it has to be, but you and I both know he’s stronger than Dexic and if anyone has a chance of saving her, it’s him.”
“But…” Tom started and stopped his complaint and saw the look on his friend's face.
“You know something I don’t… I can see it… what am I missing?”
Shaking his head, Everett shrugged.

“IF I could tell you something, I would, but trust me when I say that Seth is going to make every other Faction tread lightly when targeting us.”
***
Lava ran along the rocks near them as they sweated, climbing up the massive volcano that occasionally spewed molten rocks near them.
“The only thing hotter than this dungeon floor is Tanila’s attitude,” Fowl muttered as he picked up the red gem that had appeared.
Max nodded and turned back, seeing the look she still gave him.
Last night had been long after he told her his plan.
“There is no other way and you know it.”
Fowl nodded and sighed, giving his friend a gentle pat on the shoulder.
“I’ll bet all my gold on you again. Trust me, I never doubt you will come through.”
“Five more up ahead!” Cordellia shouted as the two men began leading the way up the rock.
“Damn fire golems,” Fowl muttered. “I can already feel my beard being singed.”
“Please, you’ve been hit one time, and that was your fault.”
Chuckling, Fowl nodded.
Max turned around, ignoring the gaze of frustration on the woman that he loved and smiled.
“I’ll cast on the left one. Cordellia you focus the one on the right. Tanila you have the one next to her. Any questions?”
“Are all men idiots?” Batrire asked, earning her a chuckle from both their warrior and ranger.
“Usually, but that’s why women love us.”
Max turned, smiling as he summoned an ice spear.
“On three!”
Two giant ice spears raced toward the fire golems while an ice arrow sped toward its target.
Both golems exploded from the impact, neither able to withstand the amount of damage done by either spell. Even without the equipment Tanila had and her familiar, his intelligence was above the three hundred mark, a stat which apparently wasn’t common for most at these stages.
Cordellia’s arrows continued to tear off chunks of the golem, the ice freezing part of its body.
The remaining two began their descent down the mountain at them, moving quickly, and Fowl rushed to get in their way.
Max moved to join him and as the two golems got close, went invis, popping right out and slicing one in half before Fowl landed a strike on his victim.
Another attack later, all five were dispatched as easily as the others.
“This is getting old,” Fowl said as he watched the golem’s body begin to cool, the lava that had filled their cracks and the flames that were once a roaring fire now went dark.
“Better than the alternative,” Max replied. “We’ve still got a solid eight hours or so before we reach the top.”
“Why don’t you speed things up?” Tanila asked as the trio came up behind them.
“You really want me to run around pulling these things in packs and destroying them all?”
“I believe you told me your plan was to get strong as fast as possible,” their mage replied. “Wouldn’t killing as many of them as you can at once be the easiest way to do that?”
Max shrugged and nodded, seeing that no one else seemed to complain about it.
“Fine, just make sure Fowl has you all protected. There were a few that appeared from the lava as we got close.”
Tanila cleared her throat.
“We’ll be fine. Now go.”
Without waiting, Max took off running.
“Are you sure about this?” Batrire asked as she watched her friend’s face.

“He’s made up his mind and you know it. I can argue and fight but he won’t give up this notion of being the hero or protecting those he considers family. All I can do now is try to help him get stronger, and that means letting him do what he does best.”
“Kill stuff,” Fowl interjected.
“Exactly. Now let's start moving, I have no doubt he will be faster than we imagined.”

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

I just got notification that the audio for book 1 of my Viking series is up for preorder! [Battle Through the Nine Realms [Isekai / LitRPG] (Book 1 Stubs 9/22) Goes to Amazon/Audible | Royal Road]

Super excited! If you haven't read the series, you can find it on RR before book 1 Stubs later this month

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/87559/battle-through-the-nine-realms-isekai-litrpg

Battle Through the Nine Realms (Audio link)

Goes live 10/1!

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

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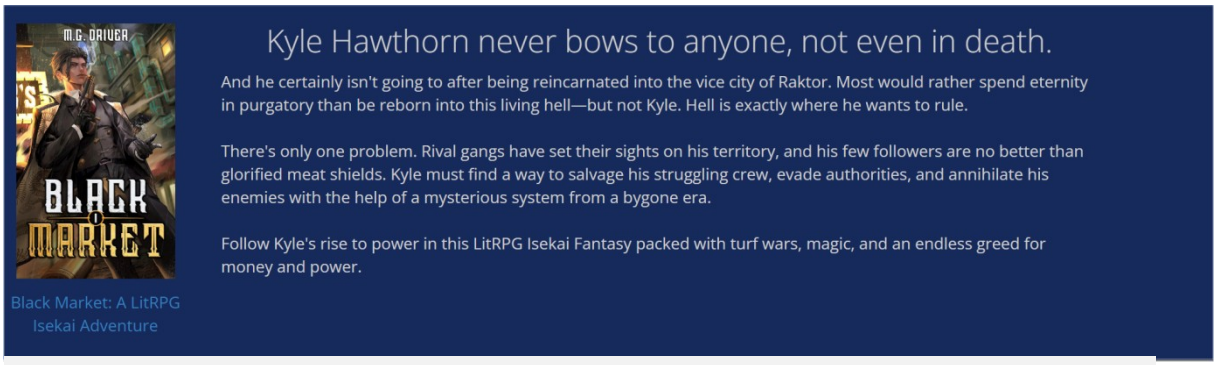
M.G. DRIVER
BLACK MARKET
Black Market: A LitRPG Isekai Adventure
Kyle Hawthorn never bows to anyone, not even in death.
And he certainly isn't going to after being reincarnated into the vice city of Raktor. Most would rather spend eternity in purgatory than be reborn into this living hell—but not Kyle. Hell is exactly where he wants to rule.
There's only one problem. Rival gangs have set their sights on his territory, and his few followers are no better than glorified meat shields. Kyle must find a way to salvage his struggling crew, evade authorities, and annihilate his enemies with the help of a mysterious system from a bygone era.
Follow Kyle's rise to power in this LitRPG Isekai Fantasy packed with turf wars, magic, and an endless greed for money and power.

Chapter 233 - Getting Stronger

“What is it?” Tanila asked as they made their way up the incline volcano, following the rough path.
Cordellia was peering with her hand shielding her eyes and frowning.
“I think… oh shite! Seth is bringing a bunch of stuff towards us!”
Without missing a beat, Fowl moved into a front position while everyone else got ready to get on top of a stone wall once Talina summoned it.
“It looks like… lizards and some kind of… oh crap! Those lizards are spewing flaming rocks at him!”

Batrire and Fowl were trying to see what their ranger could spot, yet their eyes didn't have the range or clarity. The fumes and heat waves coming off everything didn't help either with their attempts.
"He's coming fast! Ten seconds tops!"
Max was racing down the mountain, occasionally turning and sending an ice spear up at the horde of creatures coming after him.
"I need help!" Max yelled as he ran toward them. "Slimes!"
Tanila cursed and Batrire groaned upon hearing that there were more than just the lizards coming.
Max was a few seconds away when he wheeled around and checked once more over his shoulder.
Jogging backwards while his sonar kept his feet from tripping on any of the jagged edges of rock or catching on a crack, Max took in the sight of the thirty plus lizards that were closest to him. Off about three hundred yards or more were at least eight slimes making their way down the volcano.
"Ice rain! I'll do mine! Be ready to shield and wall! Those rocks are–"
As if on cue a barrage of flaming rocks came flying across the seventy yards between him and the red and black-skinned lizards. Each one was at least six feet long and their bodies became covered in a deep orange flame every time they spewed rocks out.
An air wall and ice wall formed quickly as Max and Tanila did their best to block the incoming barrage, each of them also preparing to cast their Ice Storm spell.
"What in the blazes is all this?" Fowl shouted as he saw the pack descending upon them. "That's too many!"
"They're almost dead! Just be ready to taunt! Tanila, give them twenty more yards!"
As more rocks pelted their walls and against Fowl's shield, Max and Tanila continued to pump mana into their spell, waiting for the swarm of lizards to get just a little closer.
"Now!"
Both Max and Tanila's spell unleashed giant shards of ice that rained down on the area before them. With two spells casting at the same time the area was being pelted like rain, leaving almost no area of safety as the blades of ice tore through the thick leathery skin, extinguishing the flames covering the lizard's bodies.
For fifteen seconds, death came for each of the creatures that was foolish enough to follow the others, unable to withstand the power that rained upon them.
"What now?" Tanila asked as she moved to where Max was standing, some sweat trickling down his bald head.
"The slimes… My ice magic didn't seem to affect them like it should have. Fire magic did nothing and my weapon was a waste of an attack. They should be here in about thirty seconds, maybe a little longer. What do we do?"
"Ice magic didn't work?" Cordellia asked as she joined the conversation. "Usually it does!"
"They're fire based but somehow strong against both. Maybe lightning? I haven't tried that yet."
"Tell me what to do!" Fowl shouted as he kept his eyes focused in the direction Max had come.
"We need a straight magic attack, non-elemental. Something arcane," Tanila replied.
"I don't have that and most don't as the mana drain is immense and too much at early levels. We can run. How much further ahead is the exit?"
Max sighed and shrugged.
"There is about two miles worth of creatures that I didn't kill before the exit. You all loot. I'll lure them away and get more. Maybe I can find out if lightning does anything in the meantime."
Before they could tell him to wait, Max was gone, running back toward the eight bouncing five foot balls of slime, each one a deep red like a ruby.
"Now what?" Batrire asked.

“We harvest and loot,” Fowl replied as he pointed at the corpses of all the lizards, riddled with chunks of ice and covered in holes.
Two more groups like the first, came as the party made their way uphill, trying to catch up with Max.
Each time the number of slimes grew, with almost thirty now chasing their warrior.
As the last of the lizards died, Max motioned at the group of slimes that moved almost like a liquid, pulsing as a pack that hopped side by side.
“Move back! I’ll let them get closer! You four climb on my stone wall, then up on my air wall and finally onto Tanila’s. I can get them to run past you while you make your way to the exit.”
“What about you?” Fowl asked as he saw Max’s stone wall appear.
“I’ll be fine. Now get climbing before I toss you up!”
Each of the group members got up the angled stone wall and then Max summoned his air one, keeping an eye on the approaching wave of slimes as they scrambled up onto Tanila’s that was now over twenty feet into the air.
Max cast a fireball, sending it crashing into the middle of the slimes. None seemed affected, but they appeared to fixate on him, bypassing the group above their heads as they moved down the incline after Max.
***
“That wasn’t fun,” Tanila said when Max joined them near the portal at the upper part of the volcano. Overpowering waves of heat continued to assault them, but the rings they wore helped against it.
“We’re fine. Now get out of here, those slimes aren’t going to give up.”
***
“Guards are still here,” Fowl muttered as they saw the men Major Greyson had stationed at the platform standing and waiting. “I still can’t believe they took our names and information after seeing us enter earlier today.”
“It’s called being diligent,” Batrire replied. “Something you sometimes fail to do.”
“Bah, I’m diligent in things that matter. Like drinking and fighting. The other stuff isn't’ as important.”
Their healer groaned and Max avoided getting in the middle of that fight. More than a dozen times Batrire had mentioned how Fowl had a propensity for leaving things everywhere in their room. Even with a built-in trash system in his storage device, the warrior sometimes just set stuff down and didn’t pick it up.
“Now what?” Cordellia asked.
“We head home, shower, eat and sleep. Tomorrow we will hit the next floor. Time is ticking and we don’t have any to waste.”
***
Tom spit on the floor inside the dining area as he listened to what they had encountered.
“Slimes… those are bad business. Knowing that none of the elemental spells worked against them means you were facing a very rare kind…” Tom paused, frowning as his eyebrows narrowed. “And on floor twenty three. I’m a bit concerned about what might come on the twenty-fourth floor for you all.”
Max saw Batrire and Fowl grimace for a moment at their trainer expressing his worry of what might be coming.
“We’ll do what we always do. Win. There is no other option.”
Tom chuckled at Max’s response and the look of determination on his face.
“That’s what I like about you all. No matter what the tower seems to throw your way, you press on. Now tell me anything else I can do for you?”
Everyone glanced at each other and with no one appearing to need it, Tom drained his cup and gave them a nod, standing and moving to another table with his finished drink in hand.
“See that?” Batrire said, elbowing Fowl.
“What?” he asked before shoving another piece of bread into his mouth.
“Even Tom knows to not leave a cup just lying on the table.”

Everyone except Fowl laughed as their dwarven warrior gave Batrire a friendly gesture with his finger.
***
“I’m pretty sure we can now without a doubt expect the boss to be fire based,” Fowl said as they zoned into the tower. Just look at this lovely place.”
The sarcasm in his voice wasn’t lost as the dwarf gestured at the massive city that was set inside a mountain with active lava flows.
Like the city with the ice giants, this one was similar, each roof appearing to be on fire, flames never going out or seeming to burn the stone they were made of. Giants that had flames for hair moved around the city, usually in packs of two or three. The red and orange glow of the light from all the fires and lava turned everything a soft color.
“Smells like arse in here,” Cordellia said as her nose wrinkled a few times. “All this sulfur and burning smell.”
Max nodded, having been overwhelmed by it the moment he portaled into the tower floor. Studying the layout beneath them and the massive sprawling city that was housed between the giant mountain they must be within left him wondering about the logistical nature of this place.
“What are you thinking?”
Giving Tanila a wink, Max chewed his lip for a moment.
“The size of that city and knowing how big it appears means we must be in a four mile wide cavern. But to actually allow my mind to believe that is something different. Obviously I can’t see how far this thing goes but I’m wondering now how a normal group handles tower floors like this.”
“You mean how long they take to clear one?”
Max nodded and tapped his temple.
“Up here I know why, but imagining spending days or weeks in a dungeon like this. The potential for danger. Sure, staying in one of those houses might be possible, but how much rest could you really get in an environment like this? Then comes the knowledge of normal gear and what an adventurer has.”
Max knew everyone was paying attention to his conversation with Tanila, his ability to sense and see them all looking at them.
“Thinking about Dexic’s group and how hard they have worked to get to where they were. The amount of grinding and time put in. How they managed against some of these floors and with the gear I knew they must have is a testament to their skill and perseverance.”
“You think we have it too easy?” Batrire asked, having moved to stand beside Max.
Shrugging his shoulders while shaking his head from side to side, he sighed.
“That’s a tough answer because honestly, we face stuff most never do. The difficulty is apparently higher than the rest, but we are also rewarded for it. Standing here, looking out what is down there and knowing that unless something happens, we should be done here today and hopefully fighting the boss tomorrow, means that we are going to continue to outpace everyone else.”
“Which isn’t a bad thing,” Fowl said. “You have said it yourself countless times. We need to get stronger and sooner than later.”
Max sighed as he nodded.
“Correct.”
“I think what Seth is trying to say,” Tanila interrupted before anyone else could join in, “is that the floors are getting longer and harder, but we’ve still managed to beat most of them in times not possible by others. Which means when we do reach one that takes a day or two or more, are we prepared for them?”
Frowning just slightly, Max nodded, his eyes still studying the glowing city of fire and stone before them.
“I have one other thought and it’s going to seem crazy but here it is,” Max said.
“After tomorrow, we’ll be a quarter of the way through the tower. The next twenty-five levels are going to be even more brutal and then the one every tower climber thinks about will be upon us. Then what? Does hitting that floor suddenly make us

super strong? What about those who have been there for years or decades, grinding out experience? Everyone knows some factions have level seventy plus people that continue to grind the tower, gaining experience and items. At what point do we need to grind?”
Their dwarven warrior cleared his throat and shrugged.
“Well, let me stop you right there for now. No matter what we’re doing this together and based on what your plan is next week, we don’t have time to discuss this goblin crap. When we hit the fiftieth floor, we can discuss it then. For now, we need to nut up and get this floor done.”
Max snorted and nodded, smiling at his buddy, who was stroking his beard and grinning back at him.
“Gods, you two are so smart sometimes,” Batrire said. “Fine, let me buff us up and then we can get to work.”

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https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1801183/chapter-234-a-message-delivered 2024-09-16

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

More than Human - Novice [SciFi LitRPG]

'More than Human' follows Max, an uplifted dog granted intelligence and a humanoid body. He must navigate prejudice from classmates while undergoing augmentation training to unleash his cybernetic abilities. Meanwhile, his adoptive father Bill, is a maverick inventor on the verge of a groundbreaking discovery—a dimensional technology. It attracts the attention of unscrupulous corporations and the trouble just begins there.

A superintelligent AI lurks within the foundation of the world's technology and manipulates events as the struggle for AI rights

intensifies. Will Max overcome societal bias? Can Bill protect his invention from exploitation? And what role does the enigmatic AI play in shaping humanity's future?

Releasing weekly chapters!

//A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES END

Chapter 234 - A Message Delivered

“Fireball!”
Fowl’s shield blocked most of the spell as the fireball as wide as him struck, sending flames around his body.
Max and Tanila both unleashed an Ice Spear at the giant on the right, dropping it to its knees.
Cordellia had used her empower shot on the one on the left, piercing an eye and sending the fire giant into a state of rage and fury. It was sending a fireball every ten seconds at Fowl, some hitting and some missing as its vision was obscured.
The third giant was swinging its large flaming club at their tank, the sound of the impact filling the air.
“Sometime soon!”
Max was already moving, knowing their warrior needed help as he endured the attack of magic and melee. Fowl’s newest skill was paying dividends. His elemental skill granted nice resists yet even with the Demon and Dragon boon, getting any resists from armor was hard for most others. Choosing it had been the right call for his level fifty skill, allowing their tank to shrug off a good chunk of the damage.
These giants were smaller compared to the ice ones, standing only twelve feet tall, but still they wore chain armor that was heated to a point it almost burned one's hands while looting.
His halberd cleaved through the giant's knee as it started to swing downward at Fowl again.
The loss of its limb sent it crashing to the floor almost on top of the dwarf, but he managed to dodge out of the path, immediately assaulting the toppled giant with his hammer.
Max raced toward the one Cordellia was struggling with, sensing the boulder that was coming from the sky and racing at the one he and their mage had already weakened.
A fireball was forming, and Max grinned as his legs propelled him across the twenty yards between them in a heartbeat.
His weapon was death and before the giant could react, both legs were hacked off at the knees, sending the caster to the hot stone beneath it.
A single bounce was all the giant was granted before Max’s blade took off its head, cleaving it with ease. Cold ran through him and Max enjoyed the brief reprieve it granted.
[8 Intelligence Consumed]
[8 Wisdom Consumed]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Rank of Current Skill]
[Storing Power]
Smiling, Max raced toward the other caster, sensing it was almost dead, and removed its head as well, enjoying another rush of cold.
[4 Intelligence Consumed]
[4 Wisdom Consumed]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Rank of Current Skill]

[Storing Power]
Frowning, Max grumbled to himself, knowing he had just capped out the stats in those two areas, sprinting toward the last giant and wanting to see what he was going to get from it.
“Hey!” Fowl exclaimed as Max came over and finished off the giant the dwarf had been beating to death.
[7 Strength Consumed]
[7 Constitution Consumed]
“Sorry, I wanted to see something,” Max replied, ignoring the frown he spotted on his friend's face.
“That wasn’t too bad!” Batrire called out as she came toward them. “I barely had to heal Fowl.”
“Whose cursing what now?”
Snorting, she ignored Fowl’s question and pointed at the fallen corpses.
“Remind me again who gets the task of harvesting those?”
Max and Fowl both immediately shook their heads.
“We’ve done our share. It's someone else's turn,” Max replied. “You three can figure that out while I scout a little.”
Groans came from the three women, and Max laughed as he began moving toward the town and the next pack of giants.
I’m glad for once I don’t have to harvest those ball sacks… then again, I’ve never seen someone so excited at how many we bring. Alfreda is always ecstatic when we bring back sacks of them.
Putting the thought of the older elf woman and what she must be making with all the testicles they retrieved out of his mind, Max focused on the scouting ahead.
***
The giants were denser, with packs of two or three every seventy yards or so. A few pairs or trios were inside the houses and if it hadn’t been for Max’s sonar skill and the windows, he would have found out that fact the hard way.
As he began moving back toward the group, Max almost tripped, seeing another group of five facing his group. Getting closer, his eyes realized what he saw.
Elves!
Jogging toward them, Max had his weapon stored, ready in a moment to move and react if needed.
Batrire turned slightly when he got close and saw the glances of the other group, along with a few frowns appear for a moment.
“I’m telling you this is not the path you want to continue down,” Max heard Tanila say as he got in range of them with his sonar. “Doing so will not end the way you think it will.”
The Elven man before her, who was wearing some very nice plate armor, laughed and shook his head.
Max wanted to already hit the elf because of the way he smirked and leered at Tanila.
“This isn’t a fight you can win. I’m here simply to convey a message and trust me, you do not want to be on the bad side of who this comes from.”
Those blue eyes cut from her to Max as he joined his party, seeing each of the elves bristle at his approach.
“I’m assuming you’re here to see me,” Max said as he came to a stop next to Tanila.
A snort and roll of the eyes from the male elf immediately set Max’s mood to pissed and the rage he felt inside was beginning to boil over.
This is a moment you can choose to let me handle.
That thought almost made him visibly wince, but he fought it off, knowing that such an expression would only fuel the elf’s attitude.
“We have been told you are going to join the challenge in the colosseum next week. It would not be wise for you to do so,” the warrior said, his tone sounding like he considered Max worth less than an animal. “There are others who have claimed you

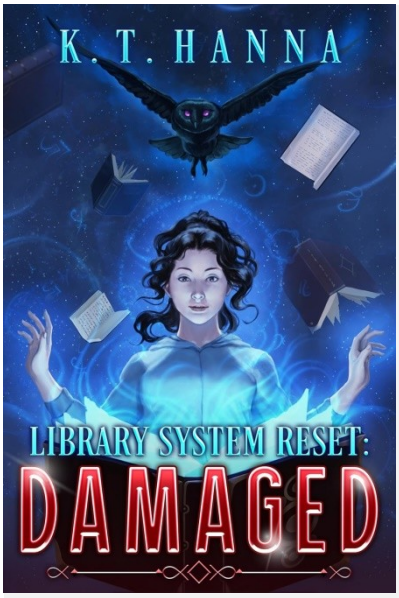
already and I would prefer to avoid the hassle of having to deal with them over one like you."
Max glanced at Tanila, who was visibly trembling. Her hand was on her wrist, moving slightly to where her bracelet was that hid who she really was.
Slowly, Max put his hand on her shoulder and gave a gentle squeeze.
"And if I ignore that? Then what?"
Those blue eyes seemed to burn with anger as the elf frowned, moving closer to Max until they were less than twelve inches apart.
"Then I would tell you to say your goodbyes. Trust me when I say you will die and it will not be in a manner anyone wishes to endure."
Max wanted to punch the elf in the face. His smug look was grinding on him and the fact the man continued to push closer only made the whole thing worse.
As he began to reply, Max felt the presence of three others entering the area of his sonar. They were stealthed and moving quickly from where the entrance of the dungeon was.
"Tanila. You four back up now. No questions."
He turned and saw her shake his head but he leaned in close.
"Three stealthed and coming. Only help if I need it. You'll know."
One of the elves nearby spat when he moved close to Tanila but as soon as he pulled away, she began backing up, giving him room and motioning at the others who did the same.
Max could sense their fingers tightening into fists. He knew his party was ready to react and respond in a moment.
"Ten more yards," Max said, smiling as the elf who had been standing in his personal space also backed up a few yards.
"Do you really plan on taking on all of us by yourself?" he asked. "Surely you can't be that stupid."
The three were coming quickly and Max heard the laughter in his head. His skill knew his thoughts and saw and felt everything he did. One of the ones stealthed was flagged. How they had made it into the tower as such was hard to imagine, but if he had learned anything, Max knew there was a group that wanted him dead.
Apparently even enough to be this foolish in a tower.
These elves are higher in the tower, but surely you can sense they are nothing compared to us. I am here if you need. Either way someone today dies.
The party of five elves had moved back about fifteen yards, the speed at which they seemed to glide across the open ground told Max a lot about their stats. They were most likely in the same tower levels as Dexic. Their gear appeared to be high quality but what really bothered him was the speed at which the stealthed one moved.
His halberd appeared in his hand and Max shook his head.
The three who were stealthed moved between the group, the one who was flagged as a murderer on his left. That elf moved quicker than the other two, racing against a timer, but also with a speed that told him they had to be either well equipped or at the same floor level as these other elves.
Am I really that much of a threat? To send this much power after me… after us…
Soon… soon they shall all learn how great we are. How strong you and I have become.
Time seemed to slow down. The smirks each elf displayed on their smug faces told Max they all knew what was coming. Not one of them had reacted when he moved his friends back or pulled out his weapon. They were absolutely certain he was about to die and perhaps all of his friends if they tried to intervene.
The problem with a sword and dagger is the reach.
For the one coming to attack from his left side, Max also knew he had them well out classed.
The moment they were within range and Max knew there was no chance for the rogue to dodge, he acted.
Stealth engaged, and a split second later, his weapon slashed through the air.

He came out of stealth almost as immediately as he had entered it, almost appearing to simply vanish from one's sight as if they had blinked a little too long.
Next to him a female elf appeared, her body sliced in half from her shoulder, through her chest and out her opposite lower side.
The smallest trickle of cold came over him.
[Consume has Consumed a Higher Rank Skill]
[Stealth - Rare has been upgraded to Stealth - Epic]
The other two who were stealthed froze.
Each of the other five likewise reacted differently. Two swords appeared from the elf who had been talking down to him, scowling while the other four stood there, mouths open and in shock.
“Perhaps you should make sure someone isn’t wearing a ring of see invisibility when you send an assassin who is a murderer,” Max growled as he pointed his halberd slowly in the direction of the other two. “I can see you as well. Unless you want to join her, I suggest you drop this charade and go.”
Immediately two elves unstealthed, rage and hatred causing their eyes to shake. A male and female elf both stood ready to pounce, each holding a pair of daggers as they didn’t move otherwise.
“Epic stealth to last that long. That means you are all trained for one thing. Perhaps you’d learn I’m not an easy mark and your constant failed attempts have made me prepare for them. Now leave or I’ll gladly kill you both.”
Each of them smirked, glancing at each other and started to slowly surround him while the other five elves prepared for the moment they hoped for.
Behind him Max felt Tanila move her hand toward her wrist and he groaned slightly.
The eyes of the five facing them changed first and a second later all five were on their faces, putting them against the hot stone of the tower floor.
Both of the assassins saw in the corner of their eyes a glow and turned, seeing Tanila standing there, golden hair, golden eyes and radiating power.
They too joined the first five on the ground before their heart could beat twice.
“Tanila…” Max said as he felt her coming closer.
“You don’t have to fight every battle by yourself. It’s about time I got involved in this one.”

17 Chapter 235 - A Pissed of Elf

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1805608/chapter-235-a-pissed-of-elf 2024-09-20

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES



Library System Reset: Damaged: A Magical Library LitRPG

Quinn may have retrieved the necessary power and books for the Library to open, but her to-do list is still three miles long.

Armed with Librarian assistants, Quinn must replenish the Library's catalogue, open the other six branches of the Library, and figure out what the hell is going on with the Library and its manifestation.

Not only do there seem to be more missing books than originally listed, but there are also missing chunks of time and information. With so many holes in the Library's recollections, it's a wonder Quinn hasn't tripped and fallen yet.

It's up to Quinn and her crew figure out how to refill the holes before the entire magic system collapses. And to collect the books. Even if she has to use force.

Chapter 235 - A Pissed of Elf

Max knew Cordellia was struggling to stay standing, especially after seeing the other seven drop to their faces.
“I’m disappointed in you all.”
Max would have done a double take if he had not heard Tanila speak in this tone before. Everything about her was different. Her voice, pitch and commanding presence.
“Everything we profess to be and yet you seven are nothing more than bullies who attempt to badger others you feel are beneath you and take advantage of another.”
“Your–”
“SILENCE!”
A wave of power radiated out from Tanila and washed over everyone as she yelled, causing the elf who had talked poorly to her to now shake as he went silent, head pressed harder into the stone.

“Do you think I wish to hear your excuses?! I have no doubt who has ordered this assassination and yet here I am, keeping watch over this one. Repeatedly, you have stained our name and race in the eyes of the capital because not only has every attempt failed, but in failing, we are seen as weak and petty.”
She moved past Max, stopping a few feet from the five who seemed to tremble more, as if they could somehow sense she was closer.
“Part of me would almost end you all now… yet then what? Now do not waste my time or I will kill you without hesitating. Why should Seth not fight in the Colosseum?”
“Your mother! The Queen! She is coming!”
Max watched Tanila stiffen. It was hard to imagine her being any more rigid as she stood there, her presence so different from how she usually was. Yet Max knew those words had struck her as if someone had slapped her face.
“Why is she coming?”
“We’re uncertain! Just that she and the queens are to enjoy the fights next week! Your sister sent word that she didn’t want him to die there! We obeyed her command as we will obey yours!”
Every word the man spoke sounded as if he was about to die from a heart attack. His words seemed to tremble the moment they left his tongue.
No sound except the lava flows and heavy breathing were to be heard, as no one spoke for a few moments.
“How long till you have to report to my sister that you failed?”
“Next week! By letter!”
She nodded her head and Max watched as she began moving along the row of elves who hadn’t spoken or lifted their head once.
What is it about her that has them so fearful of her?
They have a bond you cannot understand. To fight against that bloodline is almost impossible. You will one day have that kind of fear and respect.
Max wanted to argue with his skill but now wasn’t the time. Instead he waited and watched Tanila act like the princess she was.
“Does the queen know about any of this?”
“No, Princess!”
Slowly her head began to nod slightly, and Max saw her lips curl into a small smile.
“Very well. You will listen closely to what I am going to say and if, for a moment, I doubt you have obeyed every single word, be certain you five will all die a horrible death. Even worse is I will have your entire family line purged to three branches.”
A few gasps and moans came from the ones at her feet and each of their heads nodded as best as possible from the position they were in.
“You will slay these two failed assassins. Their lack of success has not earned them the right to continue living. Then you five will wait in here for the aura to go away inside here. I pray no one comes to this floor while you camp out. Perhaps a house inside that city will provide the safety you need while you wait.
“Next you will then return to the Faction and explain that things didn't go as planned. That Seth was stronger than you had anticipated and that his ring allowed him to see the attackers. Their failure cost them their lives. You can say your healer was stupid and healed one, flagging them and Seth choose to let them live. That is why you stayed here.
“Lastly, none of you will breathe a word that I am here or you may find my father is less than happy that I had to reveal myself and you five have ruined plans he has put in motion for decades. Unless my mother herself specifically asks you about why you failed and I know you cannot lie to her face, you will tell no one about me.
“Do you five understand?”
The sound of metal, chain and skin rubbing against the stone was the only answer Tanila needed.
“Now, go take care of those two while I watch. I will wait.”
Without a second passing, the warrior rose and moved toward the two rogues, his swords faster than Max had thought the man might be able to move.
He’s not a tank but an offensive warrior…

In just a few seconds, both rogues were missing their head, blood beginning to bubble and cook as it hit the hot stone underneath them.
As soon as his act was done, the warrior was back on the ground, head down, in the same weak position.
Max felt the urge to end the man's life as he lay there, flagged for combat but he saw Tanila's look and how she shook her head.
"We'll be looting their bodies, prizes for the one who has defeated this failed attempt again."
She bent down, grabbed the warrior's braid and slowly lifted him up, pointing his face at Cordellia, Fowl, and Batrire.
"If anyone messes with them, they will deal with me and the promise I just made will hunt them all. Do you understand?"
"Yes, Princess!"
Shoving his head down, Tanila stood up and motioned for everyone to come take the equipment on the corpses.
"Do not get up for at least an hour. After that time you may move into the first house you find. If for a moment you disobey any of my commands, consider your branches pruned."
Max felt each of the elves flinch at those last words.
"Gather this equipment you four!"
Max smiled as he moved, seeing the look on Fowl's face before Batrire nudged him and they moved to quickly loot the dead bodies. Once they were done, Tanila motioned for the party to begin moving toward the city Max had scouted.
Max heard the last words Tanila told the elves and for a moment, he realized there was a part of her he truly didn't understand.
"Remember. Do not disappoint me or it will be worse than you can ever imagine."
***
It was only after they had defeated two packs of giants that Tanila finally hid her presence.
During that time, every spell she unleashed hit with devastating power. Each ice spear either removed the head of the caster or put a hole through its chest, ending the life of the monster before it knew what happened.
"So… are we going to talk about that?" Fowl asked after Tanila once again stood before them with red hair and green eyes.
The sound of a staff on a metal helmet rang out and Fowl glared at Batrire, who gave him the same look back.
"It's ok," Tanila replied, sighing afterward. "I don't enjoy doing that… it's everything I hate sometimes about being what I am… how the elves fear me."
She turned to look at Cordellia who was silent, having not said a single word since that incident.
"I hate that you've lost your voice. Even if Fowl makes fun of it, I think it's a beautiful voice and you should never have it taken away."
A single tear formed in their ranger's eye, and she nodded, forcing a smile.
"It was… so overwhelming… I… I could barely stay standing. Watching them… knowing how they felt… You could have had them kill each other and not one of them would have argued."
Taking a deep breath and slowly letting it out, Tanila's head bobbed a few times.
"And that is exactly what I hate. Their whole life, elves hear stories about our power. Fear and respect are beaten into them. Some call it love, but I've seen true love, and that isn't what most have for us."
"Ahh Love. True love…" Fowl said, drawing out his words.
"Anyway," Tanila replied as she rolled her eyes. "The more pressing problem is my mother coming to the capital. No one has mentioned that taking place in any of the circles I engage in which means it's not a well-known fact. Something must be happening if she is coming alone and without my father."
Everyone waited for more to be said, but when it was obvious no more was going to be given, Max motioned to a pair of fire giants a little bit away down a street.

“I guess it’s back to clearing the dungeon.”
***
“Nineteen hours,” Fowl groaned as he leaned his head against the carriage wall. “I was about to say let's camp out. That wasn’t a fun time.”
“But the experience was great,” Batrire replied, her eyes closed as she mimicked Fowl’s posture.
“Aye… level sixty four,” their dwarf warrior almost whispered.
Cordellia grunted as she lay her head against the wall.
“Someones upset we ran out of experience so close to sixty-six,” Max teased.
A finger appeared, and both Tanila and Max chuckled.
“So no boss tomorrow. Sleep in, rest, and we prep.”
No one argued at all with Max’s instructions.
***
Everett was resting his chin on his hands as he absorbed what Max had just told him.
“Eight elves searching for you… no doubt they used rings and communicated with their Faction. If what you say is true, they started on lower floors and possibly had a few teams looking for you. And you’re certain they won’t bother you again? I can send a formal letter to the queens, but that would mean needing to be in their presence.”
Max shook his head, having kept Tanila’s secret. Everett had asked a few questions but knew that if Max never flagged himself, the elves were not going to openly attack him. Especially if that meant they would have to kill two of their own kind.
“Still, I wonder how long till another group comes after you. Now they know what tower floor you are hunting on. I have no doubts someone is watching you and the group enter. Eventually they may strike again but losing three of their higher level assassins isn't an easy thing to replace.”
“I think it's four or five now,” Max replied, grinning and chuckling as he spoke.
Everett joined in, smiling and leaning back in his chair.
“I really wonder why they wouldn’t want you fighting with Dexic. That one has me perplexed. Nothing I can come up with seems like a good reason for that. Especially in a two versus two fight. The odds are drastically in their favor as they can be less obvious in the level of contestants they use. One would assume their goal would be to take you out quickly and then tag team against our golden warrior.”
“Would they be embarrassed by something like that?” Max asked. “I mean, would the queens, nobles or anyone else feel they were shamed by an action like that?”
Everett shrugged and closed his eyes.
Max could see them darting around behind the old man’s eyelids, obviously working through different things.
“The only time I can really remember elves not competing in the colosseum was when…”
Everett’s eyes popped open, and he sat upright immediately, transfixed on Max who attempted to look shocked at those actions.
“When was what?”
“One of the nobles or even the King of the elves came to visit,” Everett whispered.
Immediately, the man grabbed a piece of paper and a pen, writing furiously for about ten seconds.
Looking up at Max, he sighed and motioned to the door with his pen.
“If you’ll forgive me, I need to send a few letters and ask a few questions. If someone from the upper ranks of the Elven kingdom is coming, knowing would be very important for this fight coming up.”
Max nodded and stood up, smiling to himself as he walked toward the door.

18 Chapter 236 - Difficult Choices https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1807265/chapter-236-difficult-choices 2024-09-20

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

image

Turtle Toby, The Healing Dark Lord (LitRPG)

Being The Dark Lord slaps, especially when that slap can heal.

The Dark Lord was powerful, ruthless, and charismatic. She built an army of powerful and cunning generals to serve her conquest, conquer the world, and make all living beings bow to her overwhelming might.

But she’s dead. So this is Toby, the current Dark Lord and a Healer.

Toby is a turtle who survived goblins that tried to eat him, a worm that looked down on him, and a hawk that dropped him from the sky. That isn’t so bad. It’s not like Prophets and Heroes will come one after another to hunt him down.

With a target on his shell, can Toby survive this new world?

What to expect:

• MC is a turtle (temporary human form)

• A skills and items Shop System

• LitRPG with few stat blocks

• Silliness and seriousness

• One love interest

• Slow burn (there’s no action tag for a reason :D)

Each chapter is around 2000~2500 words.

Max and Tanila spent a few hours in the crafting area as he worked on the list of items the Faction needed. Some of the metal from the tower floor with the goblins and weird dwarfs had been of higher quality than Max had expected once it was smelted down into bars.
Currently, three different weapons were being made and unless something went wrong, they should all come out as a legendary grade one.
“You seem happy with how things are going,” Tanila said as she watched him working on etching runes into the spearhead. “That smile hasn’t left your lips.”
“Are we talking about this morning or in here?”
She groaned, but Max could sense the corner of her lip forming a smile even though he never looked up from his work.
“I was talking about the crafting, but yes that was nice too.”
Nodding, Max motioned to the piece he was working on with his head.
“This metal is super strong and has a natural tendency to want to absorb magic. Part of me thinks I could even make a sword powered by a crystal. I’m not sure what that would turn out to be since it would be a fusion of two skills.”
“Weapon crafting and Engineering and Tinkering?”
“Yup. In my head I can see things that the other skill would have me do. It would look very different, but I’m almost certain there would be other bonuses given.”
Pausing, Max quickly stored the spear head and stood up, stretching and then popping his knuckles.
He then pulled the gun he had in storage and laid it on the table before her.
“So you see how there is this extra space here?” Max asked as he pointed to a wider area above where the trigger was.
Tanila nodded and followed as Max drew an imaginary box on the side.
“In here is where the *magic* is, as one might say. The power core provides the necessary energy to send the piece of metal toward the target. Unlike a bow that has its power stored in the wood, metal, or bone, this gun wouldn’t do anything without the core. It’s like my skill said, the way magic and energy are used is different.
“Our way of making things and casting spells draws from mana and the magical energy of the elemental cores. Those are fused with the items. Drawn with runes and basically take on a life within the weapon. I’m not sure if a sword could ever lose all of its energy and then seeing Fowl’s hammer, which can potentially evolve, makes me wonder how magic might even be absorbed by the weapons we use. What if each strike somehow drains a portion of one's lifeforce or power?”
Tanila cocked her head and Max saw the way she stared at the gun, thinking about what he said.
“So what you’re saying is this gun doesn’t technically belong on our world?”
Max nodded.
“Based on everything I’ve learned and know and what my skill has told me or shown me, traveling between worlds is possible. You yourself mentioned that your god actually sends your people to different worlds, trying to grow stronger through them. What if Ockrim does or did the same? What if there is a world of dwarves, slightly different from ones here and they possess a different kind of power and knowledge?”
Tanila rubbed her temple with a thumb and grimaced.
“If what you’re saying is true, that really causes a lot of potential problems for all three races as well as any other potential god out there who might want to attempt coming to our world.”
Max grinned and snapped his fingers.
“That’s what I was thinking. Everything I know is that another god somehow manipulated the system to give me this black skill. Somewhere out there is a game between gods, playing with lives like ours and others across countless worlds. Was I intended to get this strong? Was I meant to be simply some great destroyer that took out Phaius’s way of gaining power? Are we locked in a battle I know nothing about beyond someone wanting to use me a piece on a board?”
“Welcome to my life,” she sighed. “Never knowing if I’m loved by my parents or seen as power to be reclaimed later or sent off when deemed *worthy* of it.”

Reaching over, he grabbed her hand and squeezed it.
“I love you. Whatever that is worth, know that you are loved.”
She smiled and squeezed his hand back.
“I know. The fact you love me for who I am and not what I can give or do for you means everything.”
Grinning like a fool, Max gave her one more gentle squeeze before letting go of her hand and pointing at the gun again.
“Ok, now back to my previous thought,” he said, getting a chuckle from Tanila as she laughed.
“What if I created a weapon powered by a crystal but also infused with an elemental core?”
Her eyes went wide and her chin dropped slightly as the thought of such a thing hit home.
“You’d marry two different powers into one item… potentially creating something new and a grade beyond anything we can imagine.”
Max nodded slowly and pointed to some metal bars he had sitting on the table a little bit away.
“After next week, when the fight is over, I’m going to do just that. I have something in mind and if it works, I’m probably not going to share it with anyone.”
Tanila snorted and shook her head.
“Will I ever get something like that?”
Rolling his eyes, Max grinned and smiled.
“And here I thought my love was enough.”
***
Climbing first out of the carriage, Max saw that the group of guards were gone from the platform this morning.
“That’s not good.”
Each of them filed out and saw what he was talking about.
“I wonder how that went,” Tanila said.
“Forget about it and focus, you two,” Batrire snapped. “We’re not here to worry about that drama. Today we’re fighting a tower boss and you both need to be sharp.”
Max nodded and grinned at their healer.
“Thank you for reminding me. Sometimes I get carried away like a dwarf at a drinking contest.”
Their healer groaned as Fowl laughed, nodding in approval.
Four groups were already waiting to enter the tower and as they stood in line, Max continued his thoughts from last night's crafting.
His skill hadn’t responded to his questions or in his dream, but there was no doubt it was present. He wasn’t sure why it was quiet after having chatted some when facing down the elves. Multiple notifications of power being stored had also been present so it couldn’t be because it was weak.
“Go ahead,” the guard said as they moved toward the portal.
“I’ll go first,” Fowl declared, stepping up and vanishing.
The other three went before Max and, when he reached the tower floor, something was off. He could hear the heartbeat of everyone in his party beating rapidly. When his eyes worked, Max understood what had caused everyone a little bit of panic.
“Two portals,” Cordellia whispered. “A blue one and a black and purple one… on the boss floor.”
Max cleared his throat and glanced at Tanila who was frowning.
“I wasn’t expecting one of these again,” Fowl said.
“Again?”
Batrire gave their ranger a gentle pat on her back and nodded.
“We’ve been in a few while doing the dungeons. People talk about seeing these in the tower, but what are the odds of if?”
“Never,” Cordellia replied. “You could probably count on one finger the number of times a portal like this appears on a boss floor. Other floors are all I’ve ever heard about. To even begin to imagine what is on the other side is scary.”

Max stood next to Tanila and reached out, grabbing her hand and squeezed it.
“So we really aren’t going to discuss this, are we?” Fowl asked.
Snorting, Max shook his head, and Tanila started to grin.
“Wait! You’re all serious?! We’re going to attempt a tower boss through an elite portal?!”
Max turned sideways and studied their ranger's face. It had been so long since he had seen true fear in her eyes. Right now they were about as wide as the day she found out Tanila was an Elven Princess. She trembled now, like she had during their first boss.
“We’ve never turned down something like this,” Max informed her. “There is a reason we got it and if you’re honest, you know the potential loot that that boss–”
“Or death! Seriously!”
Shrugging, Max nodded, not caring that she had cut him off.
“Every floor has the chance of death. Someone could come up from behind while I’m off scouting and stick a blade in your back. Tell me which one seems more common right now?”
Frowning, Cordellia glanced at the others and saw each of them wore the same expression. Their jaws were set and a slight smile was on each of their lips.
“Don’t forget,” Max said as he pulled out the portal stone. “If it’s too much, I can always use this.”
“But–”
“What did I tell you?” he asked, smiling at her. “Do you remember I said I would protect you?”
Her mouth was still open yet words seemed to fail her at that moment. Finally she shut it and nodded.
“Then you have nothing to worry about.”
Sighing, Cordelling blinked her eyes and wiped a few tears that had formed.
“Batrire, are you ready?”
She nodded and smiled.
“Buffing now. Everyone put your fire rings on. Something tells me it's going to be hot in there.”
***
Max knew he had the highest magic resist and even then the heat of this tower floor was overwhelming the moment he entered it.
His eyes saw the tower floor before him and the deep breath he took was hot, almost scorching his lungs.
“My balls are already sweating,” Fowl complained seconds after joining him. “What in the–”
Each person commented immediately as they entered the boss floor about the heat and each one stopped talking as they gazed across the open area before them.
A circle of lava over a mile wide was before them. The same purple stone from so many dungeons was under their feet and a path led downward and toward a giant circle of stone, easily four hundred yards in diameter. Every so often, a section of stone that looked to be twenty yards wide was missing, creating a patterned ring of lava.
Crystal lines ran through the stone, an eerie pattern of reflective orange and red light sparkling from it.
“There’s no portal,” Cordellia gasped.
Max didn’t even bother looking. The moment he came over he knew they were going to fight.
“Look at that thing,” Fowl said. “What is that?”
“It’s an Ifrit,” Tanila replied. “Nasty things in the books I’ve read. I’m guessing even worse in person.”
“Listen to yourselves,” Cordellia called out. “Don’t you see how bad this is?!”
Max turned and sighed, seeing how she was reacting. A few times during those dungeon breaks others had lost their ability to think, overwhelmed and let fear take over.

“Tanila. I think you need to go all out this time. Don’t hide behind the bracelet. Besides, it will most likely help keep Cordellia from losing her mind.”
“I’m not losing my mind! You all are–”
A hand came across her cheek, and the ranger turned to see Tanila glaring at her.
“Yes, you are and get a hold of yourself. Be the elf I know you can and stop letting the fear that once controlled you still control you!”
Cordellia started to open her mouth, and Tanila lifted her hand again.
Bringing both of hers up in surrender, their ranger shook her head slowly.
“Sorry… I’m… I am afraid, but I’ll fight it.”
She sighed and hung her head.
Tanila reached out and put her hand on the other elf's shoulder and squeezed it.
“You’re fine. We’ve all had those moments. Ask Batrire or Fowl what a near death experience was like. Let them tell you their struggles and how hard it was to overcome. We get that. We really do. But living in fear will never allow you to truly live.”
Tanila turned and winked at Max.
“Until I let go of my fear and gave in to what was before me, I never knew how great life could be. Don’t be like I was and miss out on what is before you.”
“Uh… are you asking her for a threesome?” Fowl asked.
Two staves appeared and both whiffed as the dwarf dodged the attacks from their mage and healer, laughing the entire time.
“I swear I’m not going to heal him today,” Batrire grumbled.
Max was fighting the urge to laugh, seeing the embarrassment on both Tanila’s and Cordellia’s face.
“How about we just focus on the boss?” Max asked.

19 Chapter 237 - Why Some Portals Are Harder

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1808641/chapter-237-why-some-portals-are-harder 2024-09-20

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Cosmic Fairytale: Lost Constellation

Noah was an ace mecha pilot, a soldier, leading the defense of Earth against the invading Parasites.

In the conflict's final hours, he sacrificed himself to destroy the enemy mothership, taking down the Parasite Queen with him.

That should have been the end. He should have died.

Only... he didn't.

Now, as he gazed up into the night sky, naked and cold, Noah had only one question.

Where the hell was he? And why did he have a voice in his head?

_____

What to expect?

-[Did you ever Watch Once Upon a Time? Or any adaptation of Fairytale? Or play Kingdom Hearts? Do you like Venom?]

-Main Points: Mecha, Space Travel, Aliens, Characters from Fairy tales

-Background: A soft scifi mixed with Fantasy. Light Litrpg elements and progression fantasy.

-Noah main's traits: Strong-willed, Ruthless, Goofy, and a little bit very little bit crazy.

Chapter 237 - Why Some Portals Are Harder

“I don’t remember much about what they do, just that they are immune to fire, have very dangerous abilities and are hard to kill.”
“So like basically what we’d expect from a fire boss in an elite dungeon,” Fowl muttered.
Tanila glared at their warrior and his response to the information she shared.
“What about that floor? It looks like there are sections missing and paths between them,” Max said. “It looks like the center portion is decently sized, but if for some reason we get pushed off that middle area, one might get separated and that wouldn’t be good.”
“Want the three of us staying close?”
Sighing, Max nodded slowly.
“With your barrier, it’s the one trump card we can play for a moment. Fowl should be okay for a bit with his resistance skill and ability. Ice magic will be our friend, but we have to make sure Fowl and I keep aggro.”
“I’ll watch my rotation,” Talina replied.
“Then let’s go.”
***
A single path ran all the way to where the boss waited.
The boss was thirty feet tall, its horns on its head and back adding another seven feet. Two massive horns came from the thick armored plates as the bright glowing red eyes watched them approach. A smile of fire came from the maw of the beast. Its back had four giant spikes sticking off to the sides, curling upward slightly, almost

looking like wings. Massive claws were on its armored hands and its feet had matching weapons of destruction where its toes were.
Every inch of the body seemed to be armored, and flames occasionally washed over it as it breathed.
When they got to the edge of the center platform that was probably a hundred and twenty yards wide with no areas missing, the boss began to laugh.
“Foolish mortals. You choose to face me when you could have taken the easy way out, fighting a lesser being that doesn’t deserve the name I carry.”
“Now Batrire,” Tanila whispered, and their dwarf began to cast her newest buff.
For five minutes, they would have a twenty-five percent increase to their stats and they would not waste it.
“Go!” Max shouted the moment the buff set in, racing forward, shield and weapon out. Fowl was right behind him, staying a little closer to the other three as they got safely onto the center platform.
An Ice Spear began to form above him and the boss laughed, moving its hand in a pattern.
Balls of fire began to rain down around it, creating a protective area of destruction, as the barrage of flames would assault anyone foolish enough to get close.
Max, of course, was foolish enough and raced toward the boss, dodging the spells that came down, his speed and sonar allowing him to minimize all but the splash of flames that washed over him.
[Regeneration]
The boss swung its arm, a sword of fire appearing, easily ten feet long, at Max.
Sending the Ice Spear at the boss’s chest, Max smiled as the Ifrit seemed to ignore the spell, more concerned with hitting him.
Dodging sideways, he held up his shield, feeling the giant blade scrape across the gift of the fallen gorgon. With this new buff of and his stats, he felt unstoppable.
A roar came as the boss suffered the impact of the Ice Spear. A few feet of it pierced the hardened scale, sending a cascade of black blood that immediately ignited upon hitting the ground.
“Foolish mortals!”
Still smiling, Max was at the boss’s feet, swinging his axe and chipping away at the thick layer of protection that seemed at least eight inches thick based on how a piece jutted up near the knee.
Part of him wanted to go all out, using his skills, but the other was cautious.
“Join the battle my minions!”
The boss seemed to ignore Max as he chipped and hacked away at its legs. All around the boss six foot wide circles of fire appeared and from each one a flaming dog leapt out.
In a matter of seconds from the flaming portals appearing, over thirty of the threats were now present on the inner area.
A glance toward his friends saw Fowl hitting one with his hammer while running back toward the other three.
Tanila already sent a spear through one and was casting her Ice Storm while Cordellia fired arrow after arrow, enchanted with ice magic, into the dogs that were coming toward them.
“I got them!” Fowl yelled out.
Pissed, Max continued his dance, dodging the fireballs that still fell from above, weaving between the kicks and stomps while parrying and blocking the flaming sword that only missed by a foot at most.
Every second meant their buff was wearing off and yet a dozen of the flaming wolves or dogs were coming at him, a few opening their mouths and a ball of fire beginning to form.
Goblin shite …
He began casting his own Ice Storm, needing to do more damage to the boss while also decreasing the number of ways he was getting attacked.

His sonar was going crazy trying to keep up with all the projectiles falling at him and everything else. Max knew his luck had run out when he couldn't block the strike, or a kick. Even worse would be if he was overwhelmed by the pack of summoned dogs.
[Bulwark]
[Armored Warrior]
The kick came as Max blocked the sword, knowing it would be the worst of the attacks.
Even with his skills, the boss hit him hard enough to move him a few feet, which was impressive. Ten percent of his total hit points were gone from that one attack, but Max was almost done preparing his spell when the three gouts of flame hit him.
Flesh began to burn, but his mind stayed strong, assisted by the ability he now had.
Two more seconds passed and the rain of ice spears fell, gouging the bodies of the summoned hounds and the boss.
Max felt the Ifrit move back a few steps, turning toward him and bending over.
Glancing up, the flaming maw was open as wide as possible and giant flames appeared in its mouth.
As the stream of fire raced toward Max, an arrow struck the side of its neck, shattering the scales there and plunging deep inside.
The Ifrit's head moved sideways from the attack, sending its own attack away from Max who had hidden behind his shield, preparing to endure as long as he could the attack.
Only a few short seconds washed over him, burning the flesh beneath his armor immediately.
Half his life was gone in that brief moment and Cordellia's attack had saved him from something he hadn't really been prepared for.
"Big heal!"
Max regretted having stood there, being overconfident in his ability and self. It had almost cost him his life.
Seeing an opportunity with the boss distracted even in the slightest, Max went for the kill.
[Demonic Teleportation]
[Power Strike]
[Magical Strike]
[Rampage]
As his flesh regrew and the pain of the muscles that had burnt away subsided, Max swung at the area Cordellia's arrow had struck.
The barrage of attacks connected and as they did, the world seemed to shift.
Laughter came from the Ifrit and a hand approached.
Max turned, holding his weapon, spike pointed toward the incoming hand as he leaned against the boss's head.
Black blood squirted as the weapon pierced the Ifrit's palm, splattering on and around Max, turning into flames again and sending waves of pain from the burnt flesh once more.
Casting Ice Nova, Max held his ground, grabbing the horn he was near as the boss pulled its hand back, flicking more blood as it did.
The spot he had struck looked exactly as it had when Cordellia's arrow had struck. He recognized the arrow that was partially sticking out as one of her special ones and bent down, grabbing it and tore it free.
More blood gushed out and ignited around him, earning another roar from the boss.
"Why won't you die?!" it bellowed, shaking its body and trying to get Max to fall.
Ice rained down upon them and these shards were a lot larger and penetrated more deeply into the boss's thick armor.
Max formed an Ice Spear as he held onto the horn with one hand.
His sonar told him that Tanila had just sent her next attack toward the boss and the impact and reaction almost broke Max's grip when the boss stumbled sideways.

He could tell that the spear Tanila had sent was twenty percent larger than usual and with her boosted stats and the glowing hair, there was no doubt she wasn't holding back either.
As the Ifrit regained its balance and turned toward Tanila, Max jumped off its shoulder, sending the ice spear he had into its right eye from point blank range.
It couldn't dodge or block the attack as the six foot long spear hurtled into the blazing socket, quenching the fire inside and sending both hands to the boss's face.
The roar it let out seemed to shake the entire boss floor.
Max summoned a stone wall at an angle and slid down it as he landed, rolling after hitting the ground.
Glancing around at the sword he had heard clatter, he saw it was gone. Whatever magic had summoned it and kept it alive, no longer active.
Here I was, hoping to get a new weapon.
The boss was recovering and Max went all out, knowing even if he failed to overcome the Ifrit right now, any damage done was better in the end.
Charging the legs, Max let go.
Take over. I can tell you want it.
Without a response, his vision shifted, and the world around him turned a different color.
His body moved as the skill took control, and Max watched, learning what it did that was different and better.
The halberd came around fast, striking a crack in the armor he had already created, dancing again as Ice Storm began the casting process. Each strike hit the same spot over and over with accuracy he hadn't realized was possible.
No skills activated beyond magic as his weapon rained down blow after blow upon the same spot on both legs.
Each time the boss tried to stagger, to move, to escape the pest at its feet.
Fireballs rained down but none struck him, and when the Ice Storm began anew, Frost Nova started.
A few strikes later, a massive chunk of the armored plate on its shin broke free, dropping to the ground, and Max watched himself pick it up, store it and move for the next strike.
[Berserker]
The shift was always different. The red color wasn't as bright and in the orange and red glow of the lava, Max felt it was almost a dark blood color.
Every swing of his weapon hit same spot that had lost its protection and in the first three seconds, half of the boss's shin had been destroyed, the other half quickly succumbing to the strikes.
Mid swing, the boss vanished, moved twenty yards away and behind Max.
A smile appeared on his face and Max turned, seeing the boss summing a ball of fire with both hands together, black blood gushing from the open wound.
The sound of maniacal laughter filled the air, not from the Ifrit but from his own mouth.
Another ice spear slammed into the boss's arm, yet it ignored the gaping wound, keeping the ball of fire aimed at Max, who ran toward it.
When the ball moved, Max blinked out of where it was going to impact.
[Demonic Teleportation]
The speed and power behind the next swing connected with the open wound, a loud crack filling Max's ears.
Flames washed over him from behind and the burning sensation was dulled completely by the rage of the berserker. His life didn't matter and as much as Max wanted to take control, he knew the cost.
He had given over control at this moment. The elves and their actions had angered both him and his skill. Blood had been spilt and a roaring fire inside had never been quenched.
Now there was a chance for him to let what both he and his skill longed for.

A bolt of lightning erupted from his hands, something Max hadn’t even realized he was casting, traveling upward into the underside of the boss.
Another strike hit and then the blade dug deep into the wound, almost stuck as he yanked it out, the shattering of bones and armor.
He moved, beginning to strike the other leg as the boss crashed to its knee.
The second a hand hit the ground for support, his body raced towards it, a single bound putting him there.
A swing of the halberd came downward, cleaving through a finger and then another before the boss could jerk its hand back up, its body tipping sideways when it lost the support needed to keep that position.
Each movement of the boss brought a reaction from his body.
A ball of lightning formed, slamming into the exposed face as the boss lay sideways for a moment.
His weapon swung, cleaving into the neck, two attacks landing before the boss’s hand and arm forced him to move.
Words filled his ears and Max finally realized it was his own voice screaming out.
“MINE! IT’S MINE!”
No more spells came from Tanila, nor arrows from their ranger as Max.
Roars of pain came from the boss but every attempt to stop the onslaught failed.
Time passed so quickly as chunks of flesh, bone, more fingers, hardened armor and even a horn were brutally hacked off in the killing of a boss. Each piece was collected without a lost bit of movement or stride, stored within his dimensional necklace.
When the last swing connected and then the boss’s body began to fade, Max only then realized it was over.
His body was panting, and then he fell to his knees, feeling weak and spent.
Satisfaction and a sense of peace came through his connection with his skill.
Thank you for that. I’m certain you will find the moment was worth it for both of us.
Max tried to respond, but his invisible helmet hit the stone floor as he passed out, hearing his name and sensing the others coming.

20 Chapter 238 - What One Gains When They Let Go

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1810170/chapter-238-what-one-gains-when-they-let-go 2024-09-20

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

[Themes: LITRPG, Isekai, Progression Fantasy, HFY, Tech uplift, City Building]

Dave dies twice. First time he sees a paramedic. Second time? He's in for a wild ride!

Somehow gifted the rare ability to devour ghosts and redistribute his skills on the fly at the Citadel of bones, Dave must navigate the perilous city of Shandria while hiding his necromantic powers. With a snarky foxgirl issuing cryptic quests, a grumpy dragon blacksmith holding the key to his survival, and microscopic metal monsters growing in his blood, Dave's adventures are anything but ordinary.

Can he master his newfound abilities, complete his vague quest to "slay the dragon and free the princess," and avoid being turned into an undead abomination? Join Dave as he bumbles his way through this whimsical yet deadly world, armed

with nothing but his wit, inexplicably fluid system stats, a bone knife, and the advice of a phantom detective named Sherlock!

> Read Unlimited Isekai <

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21 Chapter 239 - A Partner

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1811672/chapter-239-a-partner 2024-090-23

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Dao of Chicken https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/94270/dao-of-chicken

Book 1 - Cultivating Poultry.

Xiao Ji is a chicken.

A small sentient chicken.

Who unlocks a system and meets a crazy old man that exposes him to a whole new world of cultivation with rat princes, cowardly dragons, and many wonders, including the legendary chicken enlargement pill.

In which a chicken embarks on a grand quest to be the biggest rooster of them all.

Release schedule

First Month: One chapter a day 10pm GMT +1

Regular schedule: Monday to Friday 10pm GMT +1

22 Chapter 240 - Important Conversations

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1816082/chapter-240-important-conversations 2024-09-25

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

KERES. Book 1: The Unseen City

Book 1:

1897, as the world teeters on the edge of war, Völundr, Ambassador of the Society of Nations, gathers a diverse cast of individuals with extraordinary abilities. Steve, a devoted single father looking for his missing lover, and Alice, his mischievous daughter, will join Völundr. Other members seek redemption and vengeance, while some yearn for a place to belong. Cursed and desperate for answers, they agree to assist Völundr in exchange for his teachings on Thaumaturgy.

Their first mission takes them to the Unseen City, under the threat of a devastating terrorist attack. Amidst the chaos, the most powerful Thaumaturgist the world has

ever seen, Miss Xana, has other plans for the city. She will stop at nothing until those who wronged her face the consequences they deserve.

Book 2 - Now Available!

What to expect?

- A time when technology is turning from Steampunk to Dieselpunk.

- Political intrigues.

- Alternative history fantasy story.

- Multiple lead characters.

- Magic meets Science.

- Shonen-anime-style fights.

- Kaijus and destruction.

- Lots of waifus and husbandos.

- No harem, no cultivation.

- It may contain some mild Fantasy Violence.

- Inspired by: Full Metal Alchemist, Fate, and Mistborn.

New chapters at least twice a week

* Join our Discord server: The Ambassador's Office https://discord.gg/UC85J7uJBw

* Join my Patreon: Lucian T. Einar - Patreon https://www.patreon.com/Lucian_T_Einar

* Available on Scribblehub https://www.scribblehub.com/series/971791/keres--book--the-unseen-city-fantasy--steampunk--fighting--kaijus--magic-vs-science/

* Available on Royal Road https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/71862/keres

Max and the others struggled, knowing they had to wait for cooldowns to expire before going back into the tower. The itch of progression had gotten under their skin and they were eager to get back at it.
The only way to overcome that problem was by spending time staying busy.
“What did you find out?”

“My mother is coming,” Tanila replied with a sigh. “It appears that there are a few who can be convinced to share that truth if they deem it worth the risk. Especially when one specifically asks if they are aware of it.”
Looking up from the weapon he was working on, Max saw her frown.
“Is it really going to be that bad?”
“She is going to sit in the box with the queens, her power radiating out from around her. Every elf will be enthralled already by her mere presence, but to see her in that state is considered a rare experience for many.”
Biting her lip for a moment, Tanila suddenly held a simple harvesting knife in her hand and offered it to Max.
“What would you do for this?”
“As in?”
“Would you beat someone up or mug an individual in order to acquire this weapon?”
Scoffing, Max shook his head.
“You know I wouldn’t.”
Pulling her staff that she used every day in the tower, Tanila tapped it with a finger.
“What about now?”
“I see what you’re saying and doing, but you know none of that means anything to me. I’m sure for some it would.”
Motioning to the stuff he was working on, Tanila grinned.
“How many would do what I ask for an item you make?”
“Too many…”
“And what if I asked you to mug someone or beat them up for me?”
Max wanted to groan, but didn’t. Her tone was sweet, but the way Tanila had spoken left no doubt to the trap she had set.
“So if your mother asked every elf to attack the other races, you’re saying they would.”
Shaking her head, Tanila frowned.
“Some would. From that far away some would still be enticed to obey the command of the queen. If they were closer to her, within the aura she puts off, they would almost certainly. Now if it was my father, he could issue a command and most elves wouldn’t hesitate even if they wanted to. Say a couple like you and I, one not typically accepted was present. My father could command them to kill their spouse, and they would. Most wouldn’t hesitate at all.”
Swallowing the lump in his throat as he considered what she said, Max tried to weigh how much worse this situation could be.
“What about you or your siblings? Would your mother’s command work on you?”
Tanila shook her head.
“My father could make us though it would be very painful and I could resist for a while. My mother isn’t my father. His power is much greater than hers. He is like a dragon that is old and strong. One might think he is weak because of his age, but the truth is, the older he gets the stronger he becomes. A person might get closer and closer, thinking they can safely grab a coin and get away from the dragon’s treasure.
“The dragon might even allow it for sport and for fun. Word would spread about the aging dragon and how it is no longer strong enough to defend its horde. People would flock to come for easy pickings. Then, when the time was right, the dragon would devour them all, bringing vengeance far beyond what many might seem fair. Simply because it could and wants to. My father is the same way.”
“That has happened, I take it.”
Tanila nodded once.
“It was a horrible thing and most don’t remember it because he made certain word didn’t spread. He allowed a few who thought they were strong enough to get too close. They were dead before they knew he had devoured them.”
Max frowned as he considered the word Tanila had used multiple times.
“You keep saying devour… does your father eat them?”
An expression he had never seen before appeared before him.

Tanila's body trembled slightly as she squeezed her eyes shut. A hand moved to cover her face, and Max was certain she was starting to sweat.
Without waiting for permission, he moved close and drew her to him. Holding her in his arms, he ran his hand along her hair, gently kissing her head as she continued to tremble.
"I… I can't tell you even though I want to…"
Her voice seemed pained and each time she spoke, her body spasmed.
"Don't worry. I understand," Max said, having a good idea of what had been done to her. "No matter what, I'm here and soon you won't have to worry about him hurting you ever again."
***
Tell me you can shed some light on what she said. I need to know more if I'm going to protect her.
Drifting off to sleep, Max held Tanila close, having reached out as many times as possible before exhaustion set in, desiring to receive some knowledge from his skill.
***
Did you learn the danger of feelings?
The voice made Max open his eyes and found himself and his image sitting on a cliff overlooking planets and stars.
What? What feelings?
A chuckle came and his clone moved its hand apart and the view below came closer, showing nine planets that seemed to circle around a massive sun.
You were angry, upset, and wanted vengeance. Your love for her and your friends creates problems. I am more than happy to help with those problems, but I do not need you yo-yoing on me. If we are to work together, I need to be able to trust that you won't yank back on the chain when you let me loose.
The sight below him was hard to take his eyes off of, seeing a blue and red planet, another with what looked like seven moons, and yet the truth of what his skill was saying pierced Max's heart.
I am still angry. I've done nothing to–
You killed one of theirs. That is all a person or group needs to seek vengeance. What if someone killed Tanila? Even in a fair fight? Would you give up the anger you felt toward that person? Or would you seek to exact revenge?
Slowly he nodded, knowing the skill was right.
So now what? I wait for the next attack?
His clone's hands moved and the planets and sun before him swept to the side, another one replacing it, and then another. Soon dozens had quickly passed by until one came that was barely there.
The sun was so low and the planets that remained were covered in what had to be ice. Some huge broken pieces floated in the darkness of the space beneath him. Worlds that had obviously been destroyed.
Someone stronger will always come. Your mind is set on the things of your single world. Countless lives of beings are always in danger. The only way one can protect them is to be stronger and to leave no doubt to those who would attempt to cause problems that doing so would be repaid one hundred fold. Below us is an example of just that.
Max felt his breath catch in his throat.
Gods wage war like this?
Laughter came from everywhere, and his clone shook its head.
This wasn't a war. Below us was a single strike. Trust me, I have seen wars and nothing would be left at all. This was a message left to the god or gods that claim these planets. Feelings can crush you completely but instead they broke you to the point you wish I had ended the lives of those elves.
A hand, his clone's hand, was on Max's shoulder.

You will need to eventually break those who threaten you to prove a point to everyone else. That will be the only way to protect the ones you care about.
What about that skill? The one Tanila says her father has.
Dark eyes from his clone bored into his head and there was no expression on the face before him.
I cannot be certain as there are many variations, but it is obviously a red skill. Possibly mine, possibly not. Some require you to eat the body of those you kill. Others drink their blood while alive or sometimes when dead. Even worse are the ones that steal part of your soul. I can protect against many things, even more as I grow stronger, yet if you are foolish and fight someone or something too strong, I cannot fully help. Similar to what your queens used on you.
The memory came to his mind and Max remembered how he felt in that moment. Crushed almost beneath a willpower that was impossible to resist.
So my only option is to continue to get stronger.
You will find that for as long as your soul remains you, that path will never stop.
Max sat there quietly, staring at the worlds that had to be lifeless or almost dead beneath him.
Thank you for your help today with that, boss. I'm certain I could have defeated it but I knew you needed to be… free.
A snort came from his clone and then a laughter that wasn't like the usual one that overwhelmed him. Instead, it was as if he was sitting across from Fowl at the table.
Max Hoste, you are a being different from any I have ever met. Most would use me, seek to control me, attempt to harness my power for their own gain, and yet even now you see me as more than just a tool. For that…
Sitting there quietly, Max waited for what would come next.
A minute passed, and his clone finally faced him.
Thank you. Now go to sleep. You have a tower to climb and we have a score to settle soon.
***
"Rooting!" Tanila called out as she locked down the third ogre in the group.
Max's weapon cleaved the one he had reached in half, frustrated at having to chase it when it raced off towards another group.
Fowl was pissed as his aura didn't seem to keep the ogres' attention. Each one only bothered to attack the pair of them when they blocked the path to the three women.
"Mine's down! Assisting!"
Max saw Cordellia had taken out her target and was now assisting the one Fowl had intercepted, the pair of them dancing side to side as the ten-foot monster attempted to get past the dwarf.
What in the world is going on? These things are far smarter than before.
The first pack had surprised them by splitting up and racing to the sides, not charging head on like every other ogre had. Their brown skin was hardened, resistant to arrows unless it was an empowered shot and took longer for Cordellia to take hers out.
Tanila still could one shot one if she got the drop on them, but these ogres were fast and smart, using their weapons to block the attacks as if they somehow knew they were coming.
"Two down!" Tanila shouted.
Max reached the third one that was rooted and even though it attempted to block his strikes, the poor creature never had a chance. His new strength reminded him of how it felt when the taller creatures struck his weapon. Parrying and blocking drove them backward and when that wasn't possible, the weapon just slowed his strike some, still cutting into their flesh.
With the runners down and the last one falling to Fowl and Cordellia, everyone took a deep breath and let it out.

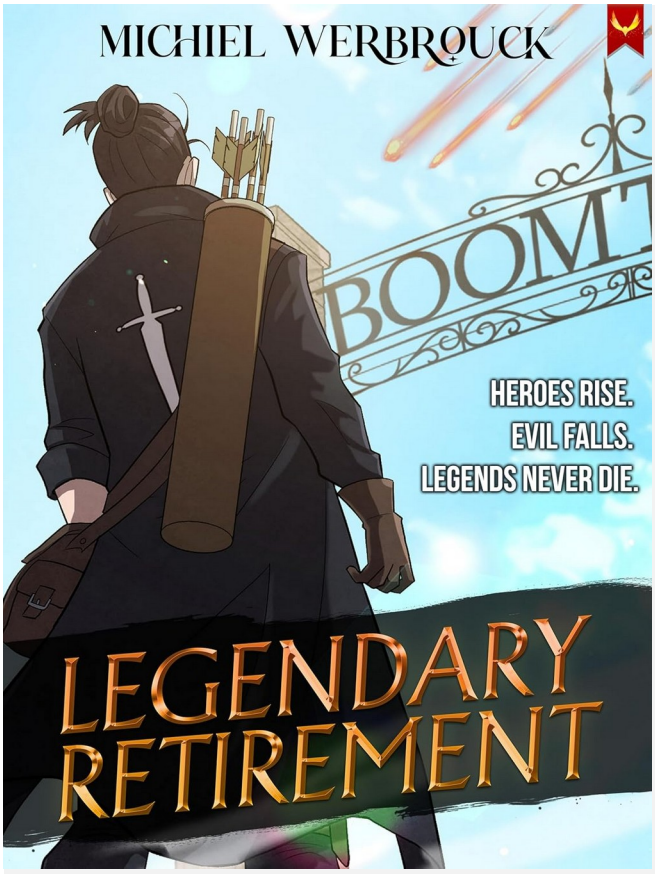
“What in the gods is with these things?” Fowl asked again. “I mean, it's like they don’t like me at all!”
Max nodded as he tossed one of the ogre's swords into his inventory.
“These things aren’t as big, but they’re fast,” Max replied. “What is weird is how none of them talk, make a sound, and those eyes. The way they stare at you is almost creepy.”
“We have a lot of ogres to fight,” Tanila said as she motioned around the grassy plains that were a few miles wide and hedged in by massive cliffs. “I can see at least fifteen packs from here. I was going to offer to let you try to bring a group, but I’m not sure that would work.”
Snorting, Max nodded.
“I thought the same thing, but with how they run, don’t focus on me or Fowl, I’d be afraid things would get out of hand. Should we let Fowl taunt and see if that at least works?”
“Please,” Batrire answered. “I’d rather know beforehand instead of during a fight and finding out it failed.”

23 Chapter 241 - Smarter Foes

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1817819/chapter-241-smarter-foes 2024-09-25

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

One of my buddies in the author world just launched his newest story! This is the author of Lord of Goblins (epic webtoon 350k+ followers!)



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:

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24 Chapter 242 - Upgraded Trolls

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1819512/chapter-242-upgraded-trolls 2024-09-26

Chapter 242 - Upgraded Trolls

“These are just acting just like the ogres,” Tanila said as Max used the syringe Alfreda had given them for moments like this. “They don’t rush in like fools.”

Once done with collecting some trolls' blood, Max put away the equipment and sighed.

“So we’re facing a creature smart enough to roll around in the water to remove the flames. Even worse, like the ogres, they are willing to surround us, which means we have to fight near the walls again.”

“Beyond letting myself get hit, I guess the only real thing I have going for me is the fire reflect damage of my shield,” Fowl said. “So with my thorn aura and the shield, it should at least help stop some of their healing even though it doesn’t set them on fire.”

“What about if we all focus on one troll with your spells and my arrow? Wouldn’t that at least help us to finish one off before it can hopefully put out the flames?”

“Now that I have my fire familiar, we should be able to do that,” Tanila replied. “The question is what happens if more than three come? Keep ice prisoning them? Root them? I doubt they will just stand there and stay rooted.”

“We’ll figure it out as it comes,” Max said. “Ice and root are easy ways to buy some time. The problem is going to be how many come at once.”

Groaning, Fowl pointed at Max as he looked at their healer.

“It was him this time,” their dwarf warrior said as Batrire groaned.

***

“Five more! Casting Earth Prison!”

Max raced back and forth from every troll he could get to without leaving the group alone.

Tanila’s fireball was almost one-shotting the creatures, and they appeared to know that. Now, they stacked up, with one in front and using it as a shield.

Thirteen trolls were dead, eight more could not do much because they were missing arms and legs, four were frozen or rooted, and six were still actively attacking.

“I’ll get their attention if they get close!”

Fowl had managed not to use his taunt yet but the need was about to be there.

Casting another fireball at the pack of three coming toward their party, Max cut off a leg and arm from the one he was fighting now, leaving it with the other four near it.

Tanila summoned an air wall as one troll threw a club it had picked up from its fallen ally. It bounced off, the force almost shattering the wall.

Her Fireball spell began to grow above her as Max closed in on the pack of three, cursing as they split up, sending one to intercept him while the other two continued toward the three women.

Not willing to waste time, Max used his skill to save time.

[Power Strike]

His blade cut through the troll, slicing its weapon in half as it tried to block the attack. Max then cut both legs off as he finished the swing.

Tanila’s fireball washed over the front one, causing it to stumble. Now only twenty yards away, the troll behind it grabbed its ally and tossed it at the group of three.

Max’s air shield appeared as the flaming troll approached within five yards of the three, hanging in midair before sliding down into the water.

Cordellia’s empowered shot, combined with her fire enchant, pierced the troll’s skull, killing the injured beast.

Fowl was facing three more trying to come around him.

“Taunting!”

The three immediately turned and began attempting to brain the dwarf, who blocked and parried their attacks. His shield and thorn aura filled the pungent air with the scent of burnt troll flesh.

Roots came up, ensnaring the troll that had tossed its ally.

Before it could break the roots that had its feet contained, Max reached the troll, his axe carving the flesh and limbs from the monster, ending its ability to fight back or move.

Tanila sent a fireball into the three attacking Fowl, and Cordellia rained down fire arrows, helping to end the threat there before their dwarven warrior's taunt wore off.
***
"Okay, something is seriously wrong with how much smarter they keep getting," Tanila said as she sat on her chair, trying to regain mana as fast as possible. "Tossing weapons is one thing, but throwing another troll at us?"
"Don't forget how they stacked up," their ranger said as she refilled her quiver. "What are we going to do if more than twenty come at the same time? We barely managed to handle the numbers we faced."
Max could feel the gaze of everyone in the party upon him, waiting for an answer.
"We have no idea how far this dungeon goes, and without that knowledge or if there is a boss or something worse in here, running without that knowledge just means we could be stuck somewhere facing countless trolls. So for now, all we can do is go slow and try to stay safe."
Fowl grunted and packed up his chair.
"I'll do whatever you think is best. I appreciate you taking the lead on this. Only the gods and you know how much I hate that job."
***
"Do we need to try and camp out?" Tanila asked.
Max sighed and shrugged.
"It's been what? Twenty miles?"
Their ranger nodded as she drank from her water skin.
"A little more, actually. I'm surprised we've made it this far."
"We're like fourteen hours into this, and I can tell you're frustrated. Do you want to mine a hole, and we just camp out there?"
Smiling, he gave Tanila a gentle squeeze and nodded.
"I guess Fowl and I can get to work and see about making a place for us to stay."
***
Max's eyes were heavy, but after about ninety minutes of work, he and Fowl had dug out a simple tunnel four feet wide, six feet tall, and over sixteen feet deep. Everyone was resting at the back as Max kept watch. Rocks piled up slightly before the entrance of the cave.
I'm not certain if you can hear me or if you're listening but I need to sleep. If you can keep watch, I'd appreciate it.
Words never came, but a sense of something inside him felt like an acknowledgment of his request.
***
"Seth?"
"I'm here," he replied, already waking up when he sensed Tanila getting closer. "Nothing has come by that I can tell."
He felt her nod and breathed a little softer when she came and leaned against him.
"Did you sleep at all?"
"I did."
"How long has it been?"
Pulling out the watch he carried from his hip pouch, Max checked and saw that it had been about five hours.
"Five hours. I'll need to contact Everett and Tom when we get up."
"We're up," Fowl called out from behind Tanila. "You two aren't as quiet as you think."
A few other grunts came, and Max smiled, thinking most of them were awake because of how they had shifted and their heart rates had changed a moment before.
"Fine, let me step outside and tell Everett we're okay."
***
Seven more miles of swamp was what remained of the tower floor. The further they got, the thicker the trolls seemed to be. The fights continued to get harder as more attacked at once.

When the trees finally vanished and a clearing appeared, over fifty trolls stood spread out in rows, each staring at them with yellow eyes.
“Uh, how are we going to defeat that?” Fowl asked.
None of the trolls moved. Each stood there with their weapon ready, seemingly not concerned with chasing after them yet.
“We can run through them,” Max said. “I can carry you all and summon a stone wall to use as a jumping point.”
Batrire spat in the water but she nodded.
“I don’t like it, but this feels like another one of those fights we can’t win,” she said. “I’ll hold my shield out in case you need a battering ram.”
Max chuckled and couldn’t help but grin as each person moved close, preparing themselves to be jostled and slung over his shoulders.
“Tanila cast a fire nova when I say now. Tell me when you have three seconds left.”
With everyone on his back, he gave her the signal and she began casting.
“3 seconds!”
Max surged forward, water spraying from the speed at which he approached the pack of trolls.
They roared and came as a single group, still unprepared for how fast Max covered the distance.
His stone wall shot up from the water, angled as he wanted it and with a single bound was on it and flying over the heads of the trolls who started tossing clubs at them.
An air wall stopped a pair that were tossed at the right angle, sending them down and away as he landed in the water behind the group, ten yards to go for the portal.
Tanila’s fire nova went off, sending one wave and then a second wave of flames before they touched the portal.
***
Stumbling as their feet touched the worked stone of the portal pad, Max caught himself and the others this time, his sonar and body now ready for the transition.
Some chuckles could be heard from the guards nearby and Max saw the pair smiling when his eyes started working again.
After letting his party down, Max gave a slight bow and received a few claps from one of the guards.
“Did I miss something?” Fowl asked, glancing between the guards and his friend.
“They enjoyed the show I put on, coming out of the tower with three people on my back and a dwarf in my arms.”
Fowl then turned and gave a bow, smiling as both guards gave a few more claps.
“Gods we don’t need his head getting any bigger,” Batrire said. “If he does, that magical helmet will never fit.”
***
Everett was with Tom and Alfreda as they turned in all the materials from the last two dungeon floors.
“I appreciate the message. I won’t lie, a part of me gets nervous when you all don’t return at your usual time.”
Shrugging, Max watched as the older elf woman never lost her smile, writing down everything they had kept.
“This one was a lot harder. The trolls were smart enough to put out the magical fire. I mean, I was surprised that the water did that, but then again, it’s a magical tower, so why can’t water do that?”
“And they tried to block your exit… that is disturbing. I don’t want to say I’m excited to hear what the next floor holds but a part of me is. The notes you keep providing are invaluable. Knowing those trolls don’t have more than a two hundred and fifty strength gives me the ability to prepare and help outfit the adventurers coming up after you all.”
The faction leader pulled out a wooden clipboard and gave it a few taps with his knuckles.
“So far, we haven’t lost any of the five new groups that have joined our faction.”

“Five?”
Everett smiled at Max’s surprised look, and the man nodded. He coughed and hid the amusement behind his fist, having it gone by the time his hand was lowered.
“Word has spread about our successes lately in the tower. There is nothing specific about you just that we have been able to grant more skill upgrades and that our crafters have been consistently creating quality equipment. I now have at least two potential groups coming each week, wanting to discuss joining and most are content with the standard tax the Faction charges.”
“Speaking of taxes, how much money do we technically have coming to us now after that agreement Tanila and you made?”
Pretending to be sad, Everett wiped away a fake tear.
“You’re bleeding me dry is the honest answer. Right now you basically can spend about ten thousand gold without me needing to talk to the council. Even then, most of them are quite happy with the reports they get and the share of the income they continue to receive.”
Max bobbed his head as he watched Fowl start unloading the fifteen bags of troll heads they had collected.
Alfreda looked like she might go weak again as she gasped.
“I think Fowl does that intentionally,” their Faction leader said as he frowned. “Just when that poor woman thinks you’ve given all there is, he pulls more stuff out.”
“You’re a hundred percent right. Something about that little guy and getting to fluster elves. I know he doesn’t hate them, but Fowl sure does enjoy giving them a hard time.”

25 Chapter 243 - Ants in Your Pants

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1821253/chapter-243-ants-in-your-pants 2024-09-30

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

One of the authors I met at DragonCon launched book 4 in his series today!

If you enjoy Urban Fantasy give it a read

The Debt Collection (Books 1-4) https://www.royalroad.com/amazon/B0B5HN9MQN

“Oh my god! Ants!”
Max ignored Cordellia’s weird cry, her already high-pitched voice somehow hitting another octave.
The tower floor was underground in a maze of tunnels and charging them were seven ants, two larger ones with giant pincers and a noticeably thicker body and four smaller ones that moved faster and moved to flank edges of the party.
The narrow tunnel provided a little help in keeping the ants from being able to flank both sides as stone walls and ice walls stacked on top of each other, creating a choke point in the middle.

Fowl’s hammer struck one of the larger ants, cracking the exoskeleton where the attack hit.
The hammer side of Max’s weapon tore through the ant, driving its head into the ground and smashing it like a melon, sending a spray of brains and gore in an arc.
Tanila’s fireball went off, hitting the two on the left, while Cordellia’s arrows punctured the smaller ant’s protective carapace.
Unlike the last few tower floors, the first six creatures died quickly to their attacks, not requiring them to work as hard as the last two days.
An icy chill entered Max as he ended the life of the last smaller ant.
[8 Dexterity Consumed]
“That wasn’t…” Fowl shut his mouth on his own, turning to see Batrire moving toward him with her staff held high. “As smelly as I thought it would be.”
Their healer let out a huff and scowled at him for a moment.
“I know ants have a hive mind which means they should attack in a better pattern,” Tanila said. “This group didn’t. It’s almost as if they were simply reacting to us being here.”
Their ranger shuddered, and Max gave her a confused look.
“Sorry, I hate ants… it’s a long story, but they give me the…” she paused, shuddering again and then shrugged. “Ants always make me act like this.”
“You’re fine. It’s good to know though. Up ahead, I see a few tunnels are going in different directions. Does anyone have an idea of how we want to deal with this? One of them has to lead to the portal, and it’s just guessing the right one.”
No one had any good ideas, and after storing some of the dead ant parts and waiting for the red gems to appear, they headed down the dirt paths, grateful for the fungus growing on the wall that provided a little bit of yellow-colored light.
***
“I think we’re at least headed in the right direction now,” Max said as he flicked the gore off of his weapon. “This tunnel has been headed downward instead of to the side for a while.”
Fowl ripped off one of the pincers before grabbing another, tearing it off, and storing them.
“These are strong, but their bite can’t do anything to my armor or shield either. Those fast ones are too weak to stand up against Tanila and Cordellia,” Fowl added.
“So why would these be the next monsters after the first two floors were so hard?”
The silence was their warrior's reply as everyone glanced at the nine dead ants. They had hit hard and fast, seven of the quick ones racing forward while the larger two came from a side tunnel, but as Fowl had pointed out, they weren’t a match at all for the party.
“Do you think we’re being lulled into a sense of safety?”
“I doubt that, Batrire,” Talina replied. “While ants are incredibly strong in groups, I doubt they would be that smart.”
Everyone could sense the concern each party member had at how things seemed to be going. Easy fights were always nice, but after the last two floors and how hard everything seemed, this one didn’t match up with their expectations.
“All we can do is to continue as we have been,” Max said. “We’ll keep going slow and making sure nothing surprises us.”
***
“Six hours and counting,” Fowl muttered as he ripped a pair of pincers free and stored them. “They keep just rushing at us which makes killing them easy, yet now I’m concerned like you four.”
Cordellia tossed a few ant parts she had harvested toward their dwarven warrior and noticed the way Tanila was biting her lip as she stared down the underground tunnel.
“Can I ask what’s wrong?
Their mage turned and frowned, ignoring how everyone was now staring at her.
“Inside me is an itch of some kind. Its gotten stronger the last few hours but I don’t know how to really explain it other than I don’t like it,” she replied. “I can’t recall ever having something like this before and yet it feels vastly wrong and dark.”

“Like we need to leave the tower floor?” Max asked.
She shook her head.
“There would be no point to that now. We’ve come this far and whatever is bothering me will soon be found. I know we’ll be fine since we’re not rushing ahead like fools but…” Tanila paused and winced as a faint screech of some kind came from further down the dark tunnels. “Yeah… that’s not nice.”
“That sound wasn’t that far away,” Batrire said as she recast her buff. “I guess we will soon find out what it was.”
Everyone stopped harvesting and got ready for a fight, looking down the tunnels that glowed with the yellow light from the fungus.
***
Seven more packs of ants had died and the light that was getting brighter came from a massive opening at the end of the tunnel they were in.
Inside was the clattering of noise and screeching of something that appeared to be in pain.
“Let me scout,” Max whispered as he stealthed and moved toward the opening, where he could see some ants moving around in circles.
Sneaking ahead, he came to the entrance and fought back against the desire to let out a whistle.
Inside were at least seventy ants all moving around in a circle. Almost as one, they continued to move at a steady pace, heading in the same direction.
At the center was a giant black ant that was over thirty feet tall. A huge lower half pulsed and shivered as the queen ant leaned upward, both antennae going wild in the air. Large wings fluttered and made an occasional noise, but never did the queen actually lift off the ground.
It almost looks like it's in pain...
Another screech came from the maw of the queen, her red eyes sparkling for a moment before going dim again. When she screeched, the circle of ants paused for a moment before starting their progression once more.
Dozens of other tunnels led off in other directions and yet no more ants seemed to be coming or going inside the hundred yard cavern area.
Moving back to where the others were waiting, Max tried to figure out what was going on.
Anything you can tell me?
With no reply coming, Max sighed.
***
“So that’s not normal at all,” Tanila said. “Those are called death circles, as the ants will literally walk like that until they die unless something forces them to stop. No one knows why they do that, but if the queen isn’t telling them to do something else, perhaps that is a clue.”
“What kind of clue?” Fowl asked.
Tapping her forehead, their mage then pointed down to where the cavern was.
“The queen is a hive mind. If something is affecting her it might be affecting the ants closest to her like that. Whatever it is, could be the problem.”
“You don’t think it’s the fungus we collected a few samples of?” Cordellia asked as she rubbed her gloves against her pants. “I mean, we touched it. Will that bother us?”
“I doubt that is causing this,” Tanila replied. “If that was the case, all the ants in the tunnel would be acting the same way. No, whatever is taking place, it’s magical of some kind.”
“So can we attack the queen and the ants?”
Their mage shrugged at Max.
“I’d probably try to fight the queen last because I’m guessing whatever is affecting her will cause the ones walking as you described to react. That would then mean fighting both her and them. If what you have described is correct, we might be able to kill all the ants surrounding the queen first.”

“Well, without a portal, it doesn’t look like we have a choice,” Fowl muttered. “So fight seventy plus ants and hope that we don’t get overrun before fighting a thirty foot tall queen. Sounds like a typical day in our lives.”
Laughter came from everyone as their dwarven warrior motioned to the opening and started to move ahead slowly.
***
After Max moved up to where the circle was via Stealth and killed the closest one, he leaped back, weapon ready for a response. None came as the circle of ants continued to move as if nothing had happened. When one reached the body Max had liberated a head from, it simply walked over it.
Turning toward the group, he gave a thumbs up and then got to work, whittling down the number of ants, killing one each time it came near him.
Half of the circle of ants were dead, requiring Max to kill and then drag the pile of corpses away as a pile had formed.
Every ten minutes, another screech came from the queen, pausing the death march before it continued.
When the last ant that surrounded the queen was dead, the group gathered about twenty yards from the boss.
“What’s the odds of us being able to cut off that queen’s head?”
Max snorted at Fowl’s question and shrugged.
“Depends on if she fights back. Her jaws look like they could snap you and your plate armor in half and I doubt that’s the only attack a queen has. If I can fight without having to worry about it fighting back, I’ll probably manage it without a problem.”
Tanila nodded and pointed at the queen’s neck area.
“I’ll send a shard of ice. If the queen doesn’t react then you should be safe to teleport up there and then do your part.”
“And if the queen ends up fighting back?” Cordellia asked as she nocked an arrow on the bowstring.
“We fight,” Max replied as he motioned to Tanila to start casting.
Max drew closer as he left Fowl with the other three, getting into range so that once Tanila’s spell connected, he could react either way.
A giant shard of ice flew through the air and struck the joint where the head and next section of the queen’s body connected. The sound of the impact echoed through the cavern, yet the queen ant didn’t react at all beyond the force of the spell.
Without waiting a second longer, Max moved to end this fight.
[Demonic Teleportation]
[Magical Strike]
[Power Strike]
His halberd swung at the spot Tanila’s spell had hit the moment his feet touched the outer shell of the queen's body. The bladed portion of his weapon tore through the joint, cutting a third of the way into the queen’s neck area.
It shuddered, letting out a screech.
Max never hesitated after the first strike hit, swinging again and again, hacking off bits of the protective carapace as body fluid and squirted out from the open wound.
The head rolled to the side where the area he had been hacking had been weakened, resting against the section and preventing that spot from being accessible again.
Moving across the top of the queen’s body, Max began working on the opposite side, raining down attacks.
Finally, the swing came that broke the last piece supporting the massive head and a loud crack came as the carapace couldn’t hold the weight anymore. A slurping sound filled the air as the head fell forward, yanking out a large section of flesh and ligaments as it fell, dangling from the massive hole.
A single last screech came that was worse than all the others as the light of the boss’s red eyes faded into darkness.
Cold power flooded Max as he stood on top of the fallen queen and he struggled to stay standing.
[Bonus Stats Consumed]

[10 Strength Consumed]
[10 Constitution Consumed]
[10 Intelligence Consumed]
[10 Wisdom Consumed]
[Consume has consumed an ability]
[Ability does not match entity type]
[Power stored for future use]
Grinning, Max ignored the sensation as he swung his weapon with as much power and speed as possible at the strands of ligaments supporting the queen's head. Time was running out and he hoped his gamble would pay off.

26 Chapter 244 - Odds and Orbs

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1822757/chapter-244-odds-and-orbs 2024-09-30

Fowl cheered as Max had hefted the queen's head above his head for a second before it vanished into storage.
"That worked! It actually worked!"
Max smiled at Fowl, who was grinning just as much as he was.
"It did! The new storage item Tom got me holds a lot more and with you carrying everything new we pickup, I had enough room to grab it!" Max exclaimed. "The only problem is having to drop a ten foot round head into the room when we get back."
Some applause came from Tanila and Cordellia as the pair moved closer. Batrire was shaking her head in disbelief.
"Seems you managed to pull that off just in time," their healer said as she pointed at the boss's body that was starting to disappear. "That poor elf, Alfreda, is going to pass out when you two plop that down in front of her."
Max and Fowl both acquired a mischievous grin at their healer's words, and all three women groaned.
"Forget that for now," Fowl said as he motioned to the chest that appeared. "It's time to get some loot and then prepare for tomorrow!"
As one, they moved toward the large boss chest that was made from a black metal. Max stopped after a few steps and held up his hand.
"There's no drawing on the box."
"A mimic?" Fowl asked, weapon and shield appearing as he spoke.
He could sense that it was a real chest, so Max shook his head.
"No… it's just that… I can't remember a chest never having some kind of image on it. This one is just a solid black metal chest."
"That means a warrior should open it," Batrire said as she and the other two women backed up. "Just in case something goes wrong."
Max nodded and pulled out his shield, moving slowly towards the chest.
When he got close, he tapped it a few times with the tip of his halberd, hearing the sound of metal on metal. When nothing happened, he lifted the lid, using the tip again to pry it open.
Peering inside, he sighed.
"This sucks… it's just a few crystals for the Faction. Nothing else."
Everyone moved quickly and came to stand where Max was, finding he wasn't pulling their leg.
Inside were nothing but three crystals.
"That's really weird," Cordellia stated. "I can't ever remember hearing of just crystals after a boss like this."
Tanila waited for Max to stand back up as she watched him inspect the outside of the chest with his fingers. He was running them over the smooth and blank surface that always had a relief or some kind of etching on it.

“What are you thinking?”
Shrugging, Max removed the crystals from the chest and frowned.
“I’m not sure, but at least we won and know the next floor is the boss,” Max replied. “For now we can go home, eat, shower and talk with Tom about what we faced.”
Max pointed at the portal he sensed had appeared behind them as the chest faded before them.
“And a bathroom!” Fowl called out as he turned and began moving toward the exit.
***
Tom, Everett and Alfreda stood there in shock as Max dropped the queen’s head onto the floor of the room.
“Oh my,” the older Elven woman said as the pair of empty eyes stared right at her. “I think my heart almost stopped.”
Fowl chuckled and received an elbow from Batrire.
“Blame it on those two,” Tanila said as she gave Max an eye roll. “Part of being men, I guess as they thought it would be funny.”
Everett and Tom chuckled and ignored the look the older Elven woman gave each of them.
“It was funny, that I will admit,” their Faction leader replied. “Still, the fact you managed to bring back the entire head is impressive. Combined with the sacks of materials Fowl has given us, we have had to start shipping things off to the other kingdoms. We can no longer handle the amount of materials you five have been bringing us. Our coffers have grown quite a bit.”
The smile on the older man’s face told Max that a time was coming when he would need to send Tanila in to haggle for a few other items. Gear wasn’t their biggest problem, as he only needed to make a few more weapons. Now it was coming down to finding small things like possible rings with skills that might help later or trinkets that both Tom and Everett had mentioned were needed at some point in the tower.
When Max saw Tom looking his way, he motioned with his head toward a corner of the room.
The older man frowned a moment and nodded, leaving Alfreda and Everett to continue their inspection of the queen’s head.
“What’s up?”
“You read my note I gave you. Tell me, how does the bidding look?”
Scoffing, their trainer shook his head before pulling out a piece of paper and handing it to Max.
Scanning the numbers on the paper, Max frowned and glanced up at Tom, who gave him a shrug.
“Why are they so low? Surely the odds should be better for Dexic and I.”
“Not as good as you think,” Tom replied. “You have a bit of a history in the colosseum and there was some debate about if you would even be allowed back in after the last time you appeared. Many were surprised that you are being allowed to return.”
Tom stopped talking as Tanila moved to where the two of them stood.
“It’s ok,” Max said as he winked at their mage. “She already knows my plan.”
Seeing how Tanila rolled her eyes, the older man grinned and continued.
“You have a legend growing faster than most believe possible. Killing a noble's son, supposedly defeating twenty plus elves in the street and yet not listed as a murderer, sent you on a path many wanted to follow. Toss in a few other failed attempts on your life and you get a reputation for being difficult to kill.”
Holding up three fingers, their trainer continued.
“Then word comes that you volunteered to fight beside Dexic, who everyone knows is a solid warrior. Add in your mysterious and amazing growth in the tower as well as how you almost won that stupid ale drinking competition and every person in town seems to want to bid on you.”
“Wouldn’t that make a bookie happy? Knowing people are going to be betting on me?”

“He doesn’t understand,” Tanila said with a sigh. “Seth hasn’t figured out that those who are responsible for setting odds are scared because he is apparently hard to kill.”
“But I’m lower level and they can send two elves far stronger than us!” Max exclaimed louder than he meant to, ignoring the looks the others were now giving them.
“Yes, but the news of the Elven Queen being here is something the bookies know. So they are being cautious in case the two you will face are not as strong as they could be.”
Tanila held out her hand and took the paper Max gave her, snorting after reading the numbers.
“You’re complaining about two-to-one odds? You can easily double your money!”
Tom snorted at the mage's outburst and Max sighed as he nodded.
“Yes, but imagine if it was five to one or ten to one!”
Groaning, Tanila balled up the paper and tossed it back at Max before turning and moving to where the others were in the room.
Easily catching it, he gave it back to Tom.
“What’s the most I can wager?”
“Personally? You can wager up to one thousand gold,” his trainer replied. “The most each individual can do is fifty right now. They have put limits and only those who are fighting can risk more. Even the Factions have been banned from wagering on this fight for obvious reasons.
“Regardless, you four need to focus on the boss floor. You have a few days before the colosseum fight takes place and you need to make sure if you want to venture into the tower before it.”
Max nodded.
“What I really want to do right now is head to the crafting room. I am working on something and want to see if I’m moving on the right path.”
Tom nodded and motioned toward the door.
“You’re cleared for it. Go have some fun. I’ll let the others know anything I find out about possible bosses on the next floor. I’ve got teams scouring all of our old notes.”
***
You are close but go slower. I can sense the pattern.
Max gave a small grunt as he gazed at the metallic ball he was trying to power with the yellow crystal Everett had given him.
The lines he had carved on the outside at the guidance of his Power Core skill and the leading of his Consume skill had gone faster than Max expected.
Now came the difficulty of somehow getting the immense power contained within the crystal to stop pulling back from every attempt to draw it into the metal orb.
A thin thread of power kept slipping from the hollow tube he had procured when they looted the tower floor warehouse. It was supposed to funnel that power from the crystal into the orb and yet it kept failing. Halfway through the tube, the crystal seemed to call back what was escaping.
What am I missing? Everything feels like it should be working yet it doesn’t. Why does the power keep going back to the crystal?
Inside his mind, Max felt the skill considering different things and then a reply he wasn’t expected came.
Smash the crystal when the thread is almost to the halfway point of the tube. That should prevent it from going back. Hopefully, it doesn’t explode.
Hopefully it doesn’t explode?!
No reply came and Max felt that the answer given was the only thing he could attempt. The orb before him was the perfect size for a crystal like this. Had it been a red crystal, the materials used for the orb wouldn’t be enough.
Here goes nothing...
[Regeneration]
Unsure about what might happen, Max activated his healing and began allowing his skill to draw the thread from the yellow power source once more. In his left hand, he

held a strange stone hammer he had looted and waited as the thread crept along the tube.
When it neared the point that always had it return, Max slammed the hammer down, shattering the crystal and causing a huge cloud of energy to fill the room.
Power like he hadn’t imagined escaped and suddenly the tube vibrated between his fingers, acting like a vacuum that started drawing all the energy filling the room into it.
The orb spun on the small stone pedestal he had it resting on, power from the tube flowing along the lines. Like a top, it glowed, spinning faster and faster as more and more power flowed into it.
Everything Max had sensed around him was quickly vanishing and after about twenty seconds, the room seemed dull and empty except for the glowing power core that was slowing down its spinning.
That worked as I hoped. Now you can use that for the next part of your plan.
Chuckling, Max nodded.
The orb was the first item he had to figure out how to make for what he had planned. From there, a lot more work was going to be required, but thankfully all the materials and metal they harvested would provide the pieces needed for what he hoped would be a first step toward a new weapon.
Thank you. Now tell me if you can. What does this next tower floor hold?
Time is short, as this took longer than we hoped. I don’t know, but you may find that whatever awaits is far more dangerous than anything else you have faced. Be cautious.
Sighing, Max felt the presence fade, knowing that hours had passed and whatever time his skill had been saving was used up.
Storing the orb and everything else, Max stretched and yawned.
“I better shower and turn in before Tanila makes me sleep on the floor,” he muttered to himself.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Kinda afk this week - Friend of Family emergency. Have phone but not getting a ton of time to sit and check RR.

I have someone helping with edits and appreciate you all pointing them out!

27 Chapter 245 - Only One Can Fight

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1827760/chapter-245-only-one-can-fight 2024-10-01

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

System Hunt: Regalia //https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/93210/system-hunt-regalia

[Congratulations! You have been selected from billions of your species to pioneer the Towers of Regalia alongside 99 others! Rejoice!]

The mysterious message on Sam's battered phone seemed like a bizarre prank—until one of the Doom Towers, the indestructible monoliths that have terrorized the world for a year, began hurtling toward his city.

Now, Sam is thrust into a war that history has long forgotten, where ancient powers clash and the veil between fact and fiction blurs. With a newfound command over Fractured Glass, Sam must quickly master a deadly game where survival means making impossible choices. To be a hero, he may have to hunt several first.

Future Diary inspired LitRPG, expect murderous competition.

Read SHR if you enjoy:

-Character unique superpowers.

-Requirement based system.

-Strong-Overpowered in a modern setting.

-Tower Climbing.

-Monsters of Myth and Folklore.

-Cat.

Chapter 245 - Only One Can Fight

“We’re ready for this,” Fowl muttered to himself as they waited to enter the tower.
“Pep talk?” Max asked, as he gave his friend a gentle nudge.
A slight shade of color appeared on Fowl’s cheeks, and the dwarf nodded.
“I didn’t mean to say that out loud,” he replied. “Something I do before every floor.”
“As do I. Just usually to myself.”
Fowl grinned and moved to where the massive portal was, looking at the other four.

“Warrior’s first!” their tank exclaimed as he turned and then vanished.
“He loves that part,” Max said as he moved to go next.
***
As soon as he felt the tower floor around him, Max could only react because his sonar and skill told him about the attack coming his way.
His shield appeared, and the sound was ignored, confusion at what was happening filling Max’s mind.
Pressure came upon his brain. It was as if a river of water was being forced through a single tube and only at his head. Somehow he stood against it, unsure if it was the intelligence stat or the Formidable Mind skill. Even under the continued assault, more alarming were the attacks he faced.
“Fowl!”
His shout did nothing as the one he called a friend swung at him over and over, the hammer he had crafted slammed into his shield again.
“Stop it!”
Frustrated, Max reached over with his hand as Fowl swung, grabbing the weapon between his fingers and holding it in place.
“Listen to me!”
The dwarven warrior’s face was in a scowl, eyes glowing yellow and staring at Max.
Another person appeared behind him and Max spun, preparing for what he already knew was coming.
An arrow slammed into his shield, the force of it sending his shield arm upward.
The second arrow almost struck him, but Max summoned an air wall before it pierced his armor.
Even though he knew Cordellia couldn’t see him, her eyes had the same yellow glow that Fowl’s had.
Fear began to build as Tanila appeared and Max braced for an onslaught of spells.
The bow that had been pointed at him changed to where their mage was and Max cursed under his breath, summoning a stone wall that stopped the arrow meant for Tanila.
Fowl didn’t move no matter how hard he pulled and Max groaned, knowing that those items and skills his friend had would make moving him impossible.
Letting go of the hammer and ignoring the weak attempts his friend sent his way, Max dashed to where Tanila was and grabbed her, racing further into the tower floor.
Arrows came at them and Max dodged them all, using his shield and evasion as he waited for Batrire to appear.
As soon as the healer entered the floor, Max saw her eyes were yellow like the other two.
“What is going on?!” he shouted, as Tanila reacted to his manhandling. “They’re attacking us!”
He could sense the tight, pained look on her face as the woman he loved fought back against whatever was attacking her. The sonar skill told Max that she had moved her hand over her wrist and felt the change in power immediately.
“It’s the boss! It’s trying to control us and fight each other!”
With a moment to take in the boss floor, Max trusted his sonar skill and speed, dodging Cordellia’s arrows while staying easily out of Fowl’s range.
The floor wasn’t large, only about five hundred yards wide. Giant stone walls with glowing runes all over covered the boss floor in a dome. At the center of the floor was a darkness and a tall being, standing next to a pedestal of crystal. Glowing lines ran from it to different sections of the stone walls, where the runes pulsed with power.
“What is that?!”
Max raced toward the boss, hoping to end this fight quickly when he had to quickly slow down, sensing a barrier of some sort before him.
[Demonic Teleportation]
[Teleportation Failed]
“Shite! I can’t teleport past this barrier!”
“Put me down and give me a minute!”

Max realized Tanila was having to deal with being carried like a sack of flour while he ran around trying to dodge the attacks their ranger kept sending his way. Fowl and Batrire were coming toward them, quickly covering the ground, and would soon be in range to attack him.
“It’s a mind reaver!” Tanila shouted as she stood on her feet. Her hair and eyes glowed, and Max only risked a glance once as he stared at the boss only about a hundred yards away.
What looked like an octopus for a head sat upon a long thin body wearing a black robe. Yellow eyes stared at the two of them and what might have been a grin was upon its face.
“I’ll deal with it! You take care of our friends! Just stay away from me so I don’t hurt you!”
Max started to reply as he easily blocked the arrows that rained upon the two of them with an air wall, watching Tanila run away from him.
“But–”
“No! I need to use my power and you can’t be near me!”
Inside him, Max knew what she was about to do and inside him, a soft amount of laughter came from his skill.
If you could fight this boss... What you might gain would be wondrous, but that would mean sacrificing your mage friend to the others. Let her attempt this fight.
Fowl let out a war cry as the dwarf charged Max.
In shock and not concerned with his friend’s approach, Max took the hit from the dwarf’s hammer and couldn’t help but smile as it did nothing but merely bounce off him.
Over and over, his friend swung, and each time the strike did nothing, unable to damage the one who had crafted the weapon.
Arrows were the real problem, and Cordellia appeared to be ready to chase after Tanila.
Sighing, he cast ice prison, watching as the ice rose up around his friend, hating the fact that he couldn’t tell how much he might have damaged her.
Batrire came up at him, swinging her staff and meeting the same fate as her lover.
After about four more strikes from Fowl, Max sensed the change of weapons and knew that somehow either the boss realized this weapon wouldn’t hurt Max or wanted to try something different.
His friend's old mace came out, now needing to be blocked as he knew those might hurt.
Batrire turned and began moving toward Tanila.
Sighing, he cast root, keeping her in place while sensing the woman he loved moving further away.
She has unleashed her skill. You can feel it.
Max could sense the change in the air. Runes along the wall flared up with an orange and then red light, replacing the clear white color they once had.
Fowl tried to get past him, attempting to head to where Tanila was and Max stepped in the dwarven warrior's way.
“Sorry Fowl,” Max said as he kicked the dwarf’s leg.
A crack came as the bone snapped and Max couldn’t help but let out a cry as he felt the aura of thorns without the buffer of the dueling fields.
[Regeneration]
Pain subsided as the injury he had caused on himself faded quickly.
Light from Batrire appeared and Fowl moved again, the broken leg no longer a problem.
Cursing to himself, Max tried to figure out what he could do to help give Tanila all the time possible while keeping his friends from attacking her or injuring them.
A stone wall appeared under Fowl, sending the dwarf upward.

With the tank airborne, Max moved to where Batrire was and grabbed her, ripping the healer free from his spell and threw her over his shoulder, ignoring the kicking and punching she did.
With Fowl on top of the stone wall, Max immediately shattered it, catching his friend and racing to where Cordellia was frozen.
Fowl's weapon hit his back a few times, sending a few painful spikes through his back but the regeneration kept the damage to a minimum.
Running with the pair was like trying to juggle cats while standing on a small boat on water. Each of them bucked and kicked, making the progress difficult but not impossible as letting go meant having to try and pry Fowl free from the ground again.
Finally, he reached the spot where the ice prison was beginning to crack. Max tossed Fowl high into the air, sending the dwarf upward while yanking out a thing of rope and immediately began wrapping Batrire up.
Curses came from the dwarf, none that he could understand as Max wound her like a top.
While Fowl began his descent downward, Max caught his friend, not bothering with the rope, knowing Fowl's strength would easily break it.
Instead, he wrapped the dwarven warrior up with his legs as he sat down on the ground, keeping those arms pinned as best as possible. Fowl bucked and kicked but the strength difference was too much.
With two of the three disarmed, Max grabbed at Cordellia's leg, yanking her free from the ice prison, and brought her to his chest. Wrapping both arms around the elf, he could only imagine the way the four of them must look.
One dwarf healer hog-tied in a poor fashion as Max sat on the rope, keeping her from moving. Between his legs was a plate covered dwarf trying to pry the legs wrapped around his upper body.
In his arms was a female ranger that fought like a wild beast, trying to kick and wiggle free as Max held her hands and arms, preventing any attacks from weapons she might attempt to summon.
"Hurry Tanila," Max said as he strained to look in the direction of the boss.
***
Angst filled Tanila's heart as she ran from where Max was trying to protect the both of them. The initial onslaught of the mental assault had been overpowering, but her skill had protected her regardless of if she wanted it or not.
Now with this barrier in place and how the rest of her group was acting, only one thing was possible to get through and it was if she finally let go of what she had kept held back for so long.
All those things Max shared about how it feels... the hunger and desire... even though it has been a decade it hasn't decreased.
Her golden hair radiated the power as she embraced her blood and nobility.
Putting both hands against the barrier, Tanila let go.
[Mind Reaver Skill Activated]
The section of the barrier where her hands touched began to glow, and the color in the tower floor changed. Power fought against her and yet Tanila let it melt away as it touched her hands. Everything that was sent to fight her off was absorbed, filling her with more power.
Runes turned a dark red around the room and Tanila felt in her mind a voice reach out.
Stop it! This is my home! You are not welcome here! Leave and I shall let you live!
The voice would have sent shivers down most. The sirens call it had been upon entering the floor was gone, now replaced with an evil and pained sound.
Ignoring it, Tanila pressed on, watching cracks in the area she stood began to form in the barrier.
Instead of summoning magic and assaulting the barrier, Tanila closed her eyes.
She knew Max would protect her. There was no doubt that man would do anything for her. Her whole life no one had ever really loved her.

So many feared her because of who she was. Because of who her parents were. They professed affection and even the fools that attempted to earn her hand by promising things that didn't matter never loved her. It was the idea of being part of her family. Of perhaps having a child from the bloodline that flowed through her.
Max loves me for who I am... even... even the beast I must become in this moment.
Golden eyes flew open and Tanila's hair rose, power crackling all over her as more cracks began to appear along the barrier.
[Power Absorption Increased]
[Temporary Increase in Magical Power]
[Absorbing Ambient Magic]
A smile appeared as the section before Tanila shattered and she walked through.
It was time to save her friends, even if it meant losing a part of herself.

28 Chapter 246 - What One Will Sacrifice https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1829662/chapter-246-what-one-will-sacrifice 2024-10-03

NO! This is my domain!
Waves of force attacked her, and Tanila found herself laughing. Each wave struck her and was absorbed. Her power and mind grew stronger with every step along the stone floor she took.
There before her two golden eyes locked on hers and a scowl had appeared.
That smile the predator had once worn was gone, now replaced with a scowl.
Each step felt like the ground shook beneath her feet, and Tanila couldn't help but grin.
Power beyond what most could imagine flooded through her. Right now the truth of who she was and what she could become was clear. None could stand before her.
The Mind Reaver lifted a hand from the crystal, pointing it at her, and a bolt of purple came racing toward her.
Lifting her hand, Tanila caught the bolt of purple power and held it mid air, studying it, watching as the weaves and waves of magic flexed in her hand.
"You dare challenge me?" she roared. "Do you know who I am? I am Tanila Gilmenor! Third daughter of King Savantus!"
A shriek came from the boss as the purple glow vanished.
[Psionic Energy Absorbed]
More spells formed around it, and soon a dozen different colored balls of power spun over the boss's head.
As one, they raced toward Tanila and without dodging, flinching or even seeming to be concerned, she held up both hands this time, gently swirling them around and around as colored balls raced toward her.
Yards from her, they froze in midair just as the first attack had.
Moving each hand in a pattern, the glowing lights formed a single line and approached her outstretched right hand, forming three bands of four, swirling around her arm as they grew smaller and smaller until the light of them snuffed out.
[Magical Energy Absorbed]
[Psionic Energy Absorbed]
[Dark Energy Absorbed]
Tanila laughed, the sound of her voice sounding foreign.
Part of her wanted to wince, and the other part wanted her to dance.
This was who she was.
This was the power she had been born with.
"No elf, dwarf or man can–"

Her own words cut her off. A memory in her mind fought for a place. There, an image of a baldheaded man with two different colored eyes smiled at her.
Memories of him flooded her brain.
One moment, he was lying next to her in bed.
Another, he was feeding her some food.
Memory after memory assaulted the part of her mind that desired nothing but power.
This bald man sat across from her at a table, dressed in fine clothes and smiling at her in a way that made her heart flutter.
She saw him again, covered in gore and spider webs, holding her close and kissing him in a dark cave.
Each memory hit harder and faster.
Each one shattered the wall that seemed to have been erected between her emotions and her hunger for power.
A flash of light came and snapped Tanila from the cascading memories.
Pain seared along her body as magic washed over her for a moment until her skill found control again.
[Magical Energy Absorbed]
Glancing at the boss which towered over her, the smile it had been wearing was gone again. Those two yellow eyes narrowed at her while its tentacles flailed around its face.
No! You cannot come here and take what is mine! I have sold everything for this! I gave it all up!
Those words seemed to haunt her as Tanila pulled out a potion and drank it, feeling the magical healing of the potion fix the damage she had just endured.
The crystal pedestal was everything. She could feel the power flowing through it and knew that no matter what, the Mind Reaver wouldn't ever leave it. Whoever controlled it controlled the tower floor.
Each step brought her closer and the barrage of magical spells continued, yet each time she absorbed them with ease. Like a thirsty man in the desert, no matter how much the boss sent at her, it wasn't enough to quench her thirst.
Finally, a yard before the pedestal, Tanila paused and held out her hands, seeing the boss panting, those nostrils flaring with either frustration or exhaustion at what was going on.
"Let's see which of us is stronger," Tanila said as she placed both hands on the base of the crystal.
A scream and a shriek came at the same time.
One from each
****
A world appeared in her mind and Tanila found herself floating high above some city. It took a moment and she realized it was her home. The capital she grew up in.
Familiar towers, buildings and the castle she could never forget filled her vision.
Fine white stone that had no traces of seams stood tall, the power of the magic her people possessed on full display as architecture that focused on soft curves, tall spires and clean stone rang out upon the palace.
She descended, falling toward the courtyard where people were present. Something was taking place, and it looked familiar.
An itch that reminded Tanila of a memory she had long forgotten.
She flew down towards the grounds, seeing the lush trees in full bloom, the perfectly manicured grass and stone carvings, yet ignored them all, instead focused on the six people that were below.
Standing on a set of white tiles were two girls, each covered in sweat, gold hair radiating as a pair of elves also with gold hair stood watching. Near the other end of the tiled area were two blond-haired guards, standing in full red plate armor.
"Decide."
The voice from the male elf with the golden hair sent shivers down her spine.
Tanila knew what she was watching. It was the last time she had used the power she kept hidden.

Kneeling before her, barely able to stay upright, was her sister. Their duel had ended and both of the staves they had used were gone, now replaced by a knife she remembered drawing forth at some point.
“End her life, take her power or know that one day she will not hesitate and do the same to you.”
Her father spoke as if ordering the casual butchering of an animal.
Never had Tanila doubted that life was so trivial to the man.
Power was the one thing he respected. If someone was weak, they were nothing more than cattle.
The knife in her hand trembled. Inside her the hunger begged to be released. It wanted nothing more than to end the life of her sister.
So much pain had been caused by the one she never had done anything to. Ploys and plots were a constant threat, and many had died in attempts on her life.
The only reaction that her father had ever had was instructing the both of them to never fail if they attempted to end his life. Beyond that, he didn’t care.
He never cared.
Give in… let the power go… if you do, you can be the one who changes and rules the elves.
A voice inside changed what she remembered.
Tanila watched as the image of herself below moved forward, plunging the dagger into her sister’s throat.
Magical power flowed from the dying elf.
Her image began to radiate. Her hair glowed brighter.
Darkness flashed, and suddenly she was standing in the throne room.
Even though it looked different from what Tanila remembered, there was no doubt that this was the throne room.
Everything was different.
Gone was the white stone that was so pure and clean, one could tell the moment a speck of dirt or dust got on it.
Now each square inch of the room was covered in red.
No sounds came as Tanila moved across the floor.
There, seated on the throne, was an elven woman, her golden hair moving on its own even though no wind blew.
Eyes filled with power radiated, and then realization struck.
It was her.
Impossible! To sit on the throne would mean…
As if summoned by her very own mind, an elven woman came, the once gold hair stripped clean, a bald head and weakened body, bound in chains. Each chain had runes on it that seemed to glow. Holding the end of the chain was an elven woman dressed in red leather.
Behind her came an elven man, just as bald and looking weak, having no shirt and skin stretched over bones. Three sets of runed chains held him, each end held by a matching Elven woman in red leather.
“Father.”
The voice she heard almost made Tanila want to retch. The disdain, the contempt in the tone was her voice and yet every bit of it was one she had grown up with daily.
A croak came from the man before the three women yanked him down to the ground before the throne.
“Kneel before your queen!” one snapped as she kicked his side.
Seeing him like this brought a sensation of relief. Of freedom.
Joy began to fill Tanila, knowing the man she always feared would no longer be over her. That with this power, she could be whatever she wanted to be.
Yes! Give in to the power! Control them all! No one can stand against you as you rise above them all! Be stronger than anyone! You alone shall–
No!
One word had broken everything.
Alone.

I don’t want to be alone! I’m not alone!
The floor of the castle began to shake and walls fell apart. Giant stones fell and screams came as Tanila closed her eyes and focused on the truth she knew. The truth she had always known.
Max... his name is Max... he loves me and I’m not alone! I can be who I want to be, but only with him!
***
Light flooded her eyes as the shrieking of the Mind Reaver across her filled her ears. Tanila watched as the creature’s tentacles waved in the air, blood flowing down from its yellow eyes.
It was smaller now, the same size as her. Whatever power it had was being drained and whatever it had attempted to do while she held onto the crystal wasn’t enough.
Not letting herself be distracted, Tanila knew Max was alive.
She could see his health bar, still there, occasionally a small tick before it went back up.
Laughing, Tanila took one hand off the crystal pedestal and smiled.
“My turn.”
drewspoken those words, she began to draw upon all the power she had stolen with her skill.
An ice spear formed, growing larger and larger until it was over thirty yards long, poised above her head, pointed toward the boss and at the dome of the tower floor.
It rose even higher into the air, growing even more as Tanila felt all the power she knew didn’t belong to her empower the spell.
Filth and nasty things that were not hers left her body, and fighting the hunger that called out in horror as she slowly pushed them out, she continued, burning through the magic until a spear almost sixty yards long stood above her, hovering a good ten yards above the boss who was oblivious to the spell.
“It’s over.”
The tip came down, smashing into the Mind Reaver's rubbery skin, piercing it completely before the sheer weight of it all was squished like a grape.
Chunks of ice hit the ground and shattered, spilling all around Tanila and yet never once striking the creator of this destruction.
The moment the boss was defeated, she ripped her hand free of the crystal pedestal, falling to her knees and deactivated the skill she hated so much.
A wave of weakness washed over her and Tanila leaned over, retching, emptying her stomach of some black bile liquid.
Panting, she wiped her mouth before activating the bracelet once more.
Falling backwards to the ground, Tanila stared up at the dimly lit boss floor, knowing that soon her friends would find her.

29 Chapter 247 - Two Hearts Become One

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1831248/chapter-247-two-hearts-become-one 2024-10-03

“What in an ogre’s tit are you doing?!”
Fowl’s words never sounded sweeter as Max felt the fight go out of all three of them for a moment before each of them began fighting again.
“Fowl? Cordellia? Batrire? Are you back?”
“Back?! What the hell are you talking about?” the dwarven warrior replied. “Why are you gripping me between your legs?”
Laughing, Max let go of Cordellia first who rolled off his chest and stood up quickly, glancing around and seeing Batrire tied up.

“What happened?” their ranger asked. “Where is Tanila?”
“And why the hell am I tied up?”
Max stood up and began untying their healer, seeing the looks of concern on each of their faces.
“She fought the boss and appears to have won,” Max replied as he cut the rope with a knife he pulled out. “You three were being mind controlled and tried to attack us, so I had to—”
“Mind controlled?! We were being–”
Max held up a hand, stopping Batrire, who had just cut him off.
“Tanila said it was a Mind Reaver. You three were attacking me and trying to attack her, so I had to hold you down while she fought the boss.”
“Alone?! You sent her alone?”
Sighing again, Max shook his head before glaring at Cordellia and the way she was glaring at him.
“She told me to deal with you three and she would take care of the boss. It appears she was right. My only other options were to kill you all.”
Fowl grunted and gave a quick nod.
“Glad that didn’t happen,” the dwarf said before snorting. “Now I guess we’ll need to find where our hero is?”
Cordellia glanced at the two men before seeing Batrire shrug as the last of the rope fell from around her.
“Another day with this group,” their healer stated. “Fowl’s right though. We need to go check on Tanila. Her health is fine, so I’m guessing she’s probably looting whatever chest she found.”
“Gods no!” Fowl shouted as he raced toward the center of the boss floor, leaving Max to chuckle as he escorted the other two.
“You ok?”
Max nodded and gave Batrire a gentle squeeze on her shoulder.
“The only one I had to worry about was *little miss biter* over here,” he teased as he pointed a thumb at Cordellia.
“I don’t bite!”
“That’s what Fowl says, but he lies as well,” Batrire replied, causing their ranger to turn red in the face.
***
“You’re ok!” Max exclaimed as he raced to where Tanila was lying on the stone floor.
“How do you feel?”
Smiling, and accepting his help to sit up, Tanila grabbed Max and drew him close, kissing him on the lips as the other three came towards them.
“I’m fine,” she whispered. “Thank you for trusting me with this.”
Coughing and clearing his throat, Max nodded and smiled.
“Perhaps I should let you fight more bosses by yourself,” he said as he pointed at the hole in the floor near her filled with some water. “What did you do that caused a hole that deep?”
“You could drown a dwarf in there,” Fowl muttered as he got close.
Tanila laughed and smiled.
“I’m just glad you four are okay. For now, let’s not ask any more questions and just loot the chest. If I’m honest, I really need to get back and take a nap.”
Everyone nodded and moved toward the clear crystal chest they had seen when they were approaching. The pedestal was gone, now replaced with a massive clear chest. Emblazoned in red was an image of the Mind Reaver with red runes lining the top and bottom area around it.
“I’m assuming as the one who beat the boss, you get to open the chest,” Max said as he gave Tanila a gentle push on her back toward the chest.
Sighing, she moved over and pushed the lid open, looking in first before stumbling a step and grabbing the edge.
“What is it?” Batrire asked as she moved behind her friend. “Are you ok?”
“Look inside,” Tanila replied, her voice cracking as she spoke.

Each of them looked at what had surprised their mage, gasping at the loot waiting for them.
Two items waited for Tanila. One was a necklace with a heart shape on it. The other was a pair of slippers that almost looked like glass. Batrire, Fowl, and Cordellia each had a clear ring waiting for them. Max had a necklace that looked like Tanila's. There was one bracelet that each of them could roll on, but in the chest that had everyone's attention was a potion no one but Tanila seemed to recognize. Inside were also six red crystals.
"What is that?" Fowl asked. "It's not like the others."
The glass was filled with a dark red substance, but there was no doubt it had to be rare for Tanila to act as she had.
"If I'm right, we need to not take it," their mage whispered. "If one of you inspects it and it is what I think it is, things won't go well."
"Then what do we do with it?" Batrire asked, frowning at the way Tanila's face seemed bunched together.
"I'll take it and destroy it over there, away from everyone. That way, no one will wonder if I stole it."
"But what if it isn't what you think it is?" Fowl asked. "Then we are destroying something amazing."
Tanila turned and smiled softly at Fowl, who shifted under her gaze.
"IF it isn't what I believe the potion to be, then I will bring it back and we can decide who gets it. You trust me, right?"
He nodded and cleared his throat.
Tanila reached in, pulled out the clear vial with the red liquid and moved away.
That is something we could use. To destroy it is a waste.
What is it?
Some would say evil. Others would say power. It just depends on which side you stand on when everything is over.
There was no hint of trying to be sneaky or deceptive, but Max felt like he could understand whatever the potion had to be.
It took a moment, and then Max felt his eyes widening.
Does that add a red skill?
A slight chuckle came and a sense of something like a nod came over him.
"Seth?"
Batrire's voice caused him to turn and look at their healer.
"Sorry, just watching and wondering like the rest of you," he replied after clearing his throat. "Why don't you three go ahead and loot while we wait on her?"
Max watched as Tanila dumped the liquid out onto the ground. She stepped back a few yards and then sent a fireball at it. She poured more power than usual to where the liquid was.
Tanila came back, smiling and acting as if nothing had been unusual at all.
"I guess that means it was what you thought it might be."
She nodded and motioned to the rings each of the three held.
"So, what are the stats?"
Fowl grinned, and content with her answer, held his up.
"I get twenty-five strength, constitution and intelligence. Best yet is that the ring has a skill called Formidable Mind which is supposed to prevent me from being mind controlled."
Both of the other two women gasped and started shaking their heads.
"Mine's the same thing."
"Same here," Cordellia said. "This is a pretty big boon."
Max motioned to the chest and to Tanila.
"You can go ahead and I'll wait. I don't mind going last."
She nodded and reached in, pulling out a pair of glass slippers, and smiled.
"Something a princess would have," Batrire said with a groan.
Wrinkling her nose, Tanila nodded and stored them before having them appear on her feet, lifting up her robe and showing off the pair.

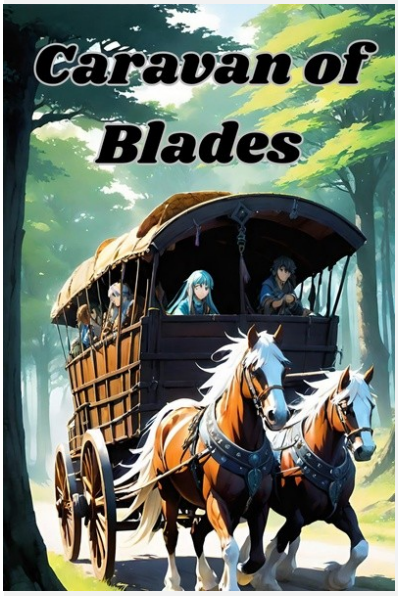
“For what they are, they feel amazing.”
Ignoring the applause Fowl and Max gave, she turned back to the chest and pulled out the necklace. It was a crystal chain with a crystal heart.
Her hands trembled as she held it for a moment and her eyes looked up at Max before smiling, putting the necklace in storage.
“That good?” Fowl asked, waiting for her to share the stats.
“Let’s just say I won’t share the details of this one right now.”
Grunting, Fowl motioned for Max to go who went and took the necklace and saw that it matched Tanila’s as well.
[Inspect Necklace]
*****
Bounded Heart
+50 Strength, Constitution, Dexterity
+10% Spell Potency
May be joined with another Bonded Heart. Doing so will share the stats of both necklaces. Once shared they may not be unbonded and will break if one of the pair dies.
Bonded
*****
Max stared at the necklace before looking up at Tanila for a moment. She smiled and nodded.
Putting his necklace away, Max grinned.
“Gods neither of you are going to share? That is so unfair!”
“What about the armband?” Cordellia asked, ignoring Fowl’s tirade.
“Honestly, I’m ok passing and letting everyone else roll for it,” Max replied.
“I’ll pass as well,” Tanila said.
Cordellia sighed and looked at the other two, who nodded. The three reached in and touched the spot, watching their faces appear and begin spinning like a top.
Slowly it slowed down and when it stopped, it had an ugly dwarven warrior face upon it.
“Woohoo!” Fowl exclaimed as he reached in, taking the item and grinning devilishly as he slipped it on.
Cordellia stood there, frowning and staring, until their dwarven warrior sighed.
“I’m not sharing anything,” he declared. “Sometimes a dwarf needs secrets.”
Batrire grunted and turned.
“Grab those crystals and let's get our mage home. She looks completely worn out.”
***
Max slowly brushed Tanila’s hair as she yawned, staring at her green eyes.
“Do you want to talk about it?”
A slight frown came, and she shook her head.
“No, but I understand even more now what it must be like for you,” she replied. “The feeling was overwhelming and intoxicating. The amount of power I could have if I gave in would be dangerous.”
“And the potion was one for gaining a red skill, wasn’t it?”
Tanila winced and nodded.
“I’m assuming your skill told you that. Only maybe a dozen people in this world would know what that potion could provide. Had I drunk it, most likely it would have upgraded my red skill or given me a second one. Neither being something I want.”
Max smiled and pulled out his necklace.
A slight crack ran down the middle, where they had joined a section of each of their hearts.
“Part of me wished we had some sort of ceremony or something, but I know why you didn’t want to tell the others about this.”
She nodded and pulled hers out, thumbing the area that matched his.
“You are what helped me to defeat that boss. One day I’ll tell you what I’ve endured and suffered, but know that no matter how much the world might offer me power and protection, if it means losing you, I’ll always pass on that.”

Max smiled and moved closer, drawing her hand to his lips and giving them a kiss.
“And now you know exactly how I feel about you.”
She sighed and nodded, closing her eyes slowly.
“If you don’t mind, I really need to sleep.”
Max grinned and moved slightly, kissing her on the lips before letting her roll over and moving up next to her.
As Tanila’s breath slowed down and she went to sleep, Max found himself thinking about what she must have faced and how hard of a task it had to have been.
It bothered him to know she faced the same struggle.
Power was so tempting, but what was the point of having it if it meant you were alone?
Closing his eyes, he joined her in the worlds of dream, content that both of them shared a heart.

30 Chapter 248 - A New Skill

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1832789/chapter-248-a-new-skill 2024-10-04

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES



Caravan of Blades (A LITRPG Deckbuilder)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/84538/caravan-of-blades-a-litrpg-deckbuilder

The entire world has been taken over by hordes of zombies. Of course there's no profit in that. So why do heroes keep getting summoned to this world to try to save it anyway? Their money is worthless.

At least that's what Finley, the roving tinker sales elf* finds out when the pantheon keeps summoning heroes into his path to save the world, all he wants is the quiet life. When the horde comes calling, you had better have an escape plan.

Heroes?

In this economy?

*May or may not be an elf.

Caravan of Blades is inspired by Band of Blades by Evil Hat Productions, as well as just about every deckbuilder I have ever read.

Participant in the Royal Road writeathon challenge.

Posting MWF around 9AM EST.

Chapter 248 - A New Skill

Max and Dexic stood side by side, listening to Tom critique them again.
“Dexic,” the older man said with a sigh. “Stop trying to do everything. Trust Seth.”
The woman groaned and nodded, not bothering to look at the young man she once brought into a troll dungeon and now knew could kick her arse.
“I’m trying, but it’s hard. You and I both know I’m used to doing the work up front. Even in the groups, everyone reacts to me.”
Tom stood there, arms crossed, as he tapped his fingers against his arms.
“You realize that as you fight and lead, Seth has reacted perfectly to you each time? I’m impressed by how well he moves even though he has never adventured with you before. Now, let’s try it again. Why don’t you try to follow his lead for once?”
The golden warrior muttered something, but nodded, motioning for Max to move ahead.
“This is why I fight alone,” she whispered as Tom moved back to where Everett was waiting.
“Would you prefer to do this alone?” Max asked as he swung the dueling sword a few times before him.
Sighing, Dexic slowly shook her head.
“No… I was an idiot, and I know that now. I was brash and stupid, but I can’t back out. You doing what you have done is the most selfless thing I can think of. I’ll ignore how I feel about this whole situation and do what I can to make sure both of us don’t die.”
Chuckling, Max nodded and motioned at the two older men waiting on them.
“I’ll feint for Tom, then go after Everett.”
Dexic snorted and nodded.
“Always pick the easy one.”
Laughing, they motioned for the bell and both charged as it rang out.
***
“I’ve done what you all have asked,” Everett said as Max’s party and Dexic sat in his office. “I’m willing to state that many of our own Faction members have placed bets on you two as well. My other offer stands. I can loan a few items to help in the coming fight.”
Max shook his head and waited to see what Dexic was going to say.
“Seriously? You’re not going to take anything?”
Grinning, Max pointed at the table, which had multiple items on it.
“I don’t want to sound overconfident, but you and I have sparred once already. You can wear whatever you want, but anything I take would hurt you more.”
Their golden warrior turned to stare at Everett, who gave her a single nod.
“Fine, I’ll take what I can and ignore the fact that the young kid whose ass I could have easily kicked not that long ago, now appears beyond my ability. Just remember me when you pass my team in the tower.”
Max chuckled and nodded, ignoring the look Tanila had given him.
“For your opponents, I’ve gotten a little bit of intel,” Tanila said, cutting off the current discussion. “Either you’re going to face two warriors or a warrior and a mage.

If they go with the second option, their goal is to separate and burst one of you down."
"Which means that whoever they root, cage or freeze is going to be left alone while the other has to deal with the pair," Everett added. "The problem is, if you don't separate yourselves, then the mage can start casting spells that will hit both of you and cause damage. I'm sure neither of you needs me to tell you how much that can hurt if left alone."
"I'd rather face two warriors," Dexic muttered. "At least that way, we can pair off and fight one on one."
"It depends," Tanila said. "There is a pair of warriors who are both at the fiftieth level in the tower and if they use them, they will be far stronger than the other. Each has fought side by side for a few years and knows the other well. Neither will need to call out for help. They will simply respond as needed."
Everyone sat there quietly as the news of whoever they would face was considered out of their league.
"What are the odds they will stack items and gear like you offered?" Max asked Everett.
"They'd be fools not to and as any elf can attest, having lived longer than most of us and being one of the older Factions, their vaults will be much better than ours. I contacted a few other Factions to see if I could pull in some favors, but no one wanted to open up their vaults. Knowing that losing means the loss of items puts a kink in most of their desires to lend aid."
Standing up, Max moved to where Everett was and gave the man a smile.
"So tomorrow night, then?"
Nodding, the older man leaned back a little.
"Yes… why?"
"Oh, don't mind me. I'm going to go clear my head. I'm about as ready as I can be," Max said as he waved at the others.
Time was his enemy, and Max wasn't one to give up or surrender.
Forging and shaping the blade he was working on had been harder than expected. It was one thing to simply forge a piece of metal. Having to create tiny tubes that were so fragile until they hardened, then setting them on the hot metal and beating them into place while infusing magical power from the core took every ounce of concentration.
Tanila had come by and tried to talk, but after waiting an hour without him replying, she had left, seeing the sweat running like a stream over Max's entire body.
Now he had finally reached the moment when this new endeavor worked or it failed completely.
You need to trust yourself. Both skills are shifting slightly as each one desires to lean more into its own. You are doing something I imagine few have ever achieved. Forming a new skill.
Max nodded internally as he brought the power core and the fire essence together. There was a tugging from both skills, one wanting more essence to be infused faster into the runes, while the power core desired to be set and freed, able to be the conduit the blade needed.
Both of his hands worked independently and at the same time.
Flames flowed to the blade, filling the runes while the orb he fought to keep from touching the metal socket designed for it sent arcs of energy up and down the blade. The hilt he had built was perfect, with a hole where the orb would sit. A crossguard provided all the protection one would need for one's hand.
His eyes saw the moment the energy and the flames began to dance together. For a while they had been pushing the other away, fighting for space along the blade. Now they seemed to know that they were meant to be forged as one.
Slide the essence to the core!
Max's hand was already moving before his skill told him what needed to be done.
Pour your magical fire essence into it!

As the commands rang out in his head, Max again was already summoning vast amounts of mana, causing the fire essence in his hand to flare to life, flames erupting over every inch of the thirty-inch blade.
Arcs of electrical power began to crackle and pop from within the flames, turning the orange fire blue.
His left hand pressed the shrinking essence onto the orb and sent a burst of fire magic from his body out of both hands as the orb *clinked* into position in the area where the blade and hilt came together.
As if a tornado had appeared, the sword stuck to both hands and began to drain mana from him.
Like a giant hole being created in a cask full of ale, his body felt like a hole had appeared via his hands and their connection to the weapon.
Fight it! Cut your flow!
Max's teeth were grinding against each other as he fought to yank his hands free from the weapon that seemed to want his power. Inside his mind, he sought a way to stop the pull of power.
Suddenly, a pair of hands touched his temples.
They were soft, warm, and familiar.
Blinking, Max saw Tanila had returned. He wasn't sure when she had arrived, but there she was, standing behind him, her hair glowing and eyes blazing with power.
"Fight it!"
Her words emboldened him as power seemed to come from her and into him.
Inside, he found the switch, cutting the flow of mana, and found himself thrown back a few feet. He spun in time to catch Tanila, whom he had slammed into.
Notifications appeared, but Max's eyes didn't seem to work for a moment as he blinked a few times.
Gasping for air, Max saw her face and the way her eyes watched him.
"You ok?"
Nodding, Max felt himself trembling and realized she was holding him up.
"What… how long was I like that?"
"Four hours," Tanila replied slowly, leading Max to a stool. "You were in that state and I could feel the mana coming off of you. I called multiple times, and you never responded. Once I tried to touch you earlier and the pain was too much. Only in the last minute did things change when the flames started to die down on the sword. What is it?"
Max shook his head, trying to clear the sensation in his brain. It was like he had been pulled apart and put back together multiple times.
There notifications waited for him.
[New Skill Created]
[Engineering & Tinkering has been combined with Weapon Crafting]
[Magical Mana Infusement Detected]
[Skill - Magical and Power Core Infused Weapon Creation Crafting Acquired]
[Magical and Power Core Infused Weapon Creation Crafting - Rank being determined]
[……]
[Magical and Power Core Infused Weapon Creation Crafting - Rank Epic]
[New Epic Sword Created]
[50 Experience gained]
Max felt his mind still working to understand what it had just done. There were multiple other ways to combine crafting with engineering, but at the moment, the thought of it felt impossible to consider.
On the table lay the sword he had created. It wasn't one he planned on using, but had hoped Dexic could use in the colosseum.
Moving to it, Max lifted it up and studied it. The blade had turned red, yet white runes stood out against the color of the metal. No longer did the orb have a silver metallic appearance. Instead it was a deep red color, almost like a ruby. The handle and cross guards were still silver, creating an impressive sword for anyone who would see it.

[Inspect Weapon]
*****
Powered Sword of Flames
- 70 Strength and Constitution
- Fire Infused - 25% Fire damage bonus applied to all strikes
- Powered Slash - Stores up to two charges of Power Strike. Takes eight hours for each charge to regenerate. 2/2 Charges Remaining.

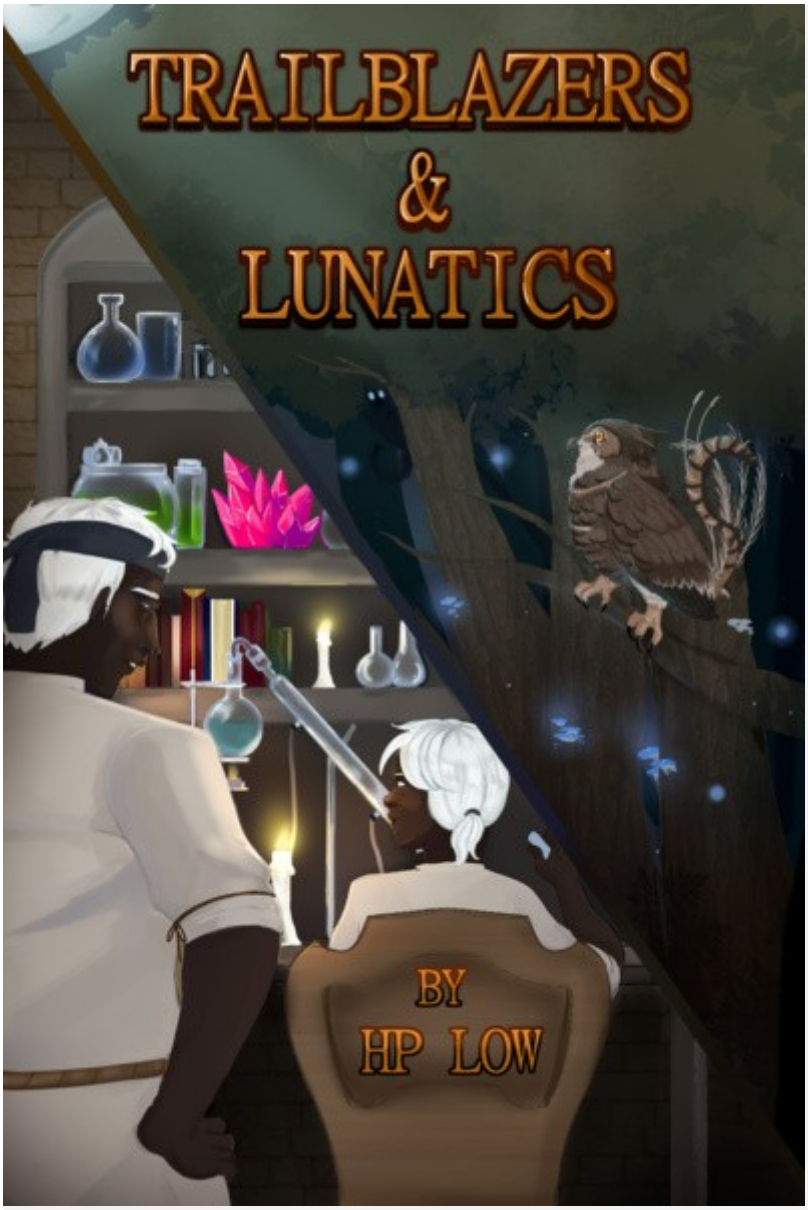
*****
Words failed him as Max saw the potential in the weapon. Part of him didn't want to give it away.and yet the other part of him knew a weapon like this in Dexic's hands would allow her to do considerably more damage in their upcoming fight. Having the ability to launch two extra Power Strikes in a moment was beyond broken.
"Your eyes are almost radiating with excitement," Tanila said as she watched Max gaze at the sword. "Do you want to share?"
Slowly Max grinned and handed it to her, watching Tanila's eyes widen. Her green emeralds were larger than ever.
"Skills?! You added skills to a weapon?!"
Apparently I did," Max muttered.
He yawned and glanced at the clock on the wall.
"That can't be right, can it?"
Tanila nodded and sighed.
"You have been in here all night," she replied. "I tried to rouse you, but for some reason, nothing would bring you from that state. Now we have about four hours before you and Dexic need to be at the colosseum. Are you going to make it?"
Shrugging, Max moved and began putting away all the supplies he had out and nodded.
"I will. Are you willing to get Dexic and Everett? I'll be upstairs in a couple and want to give her this."
"Personally? Are you sure that's wise?"
"At this point I do. What we're about to face means we need to be more honest than before, and I want our famous *golden warrior* to know I'm willing to help her in any way I can."

31 Chapter 249 - A Gift Fit For A King

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1834281/chapter-249-a-gift-fit-for-a-king 2024-10-07

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Looking for something a little slower on the pacing? Here's a fun one :)



Trailblazers & Lunatics [Slice of life-Dramedy-Cultivation-Litrpg]
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/93222/trailblazers-lunatics

Volume 1: The Mundane Revolution

"If you were reincarnated into a magical world by some twist of fate, what kind of life would you lead?"

Many have pondered this question as a thought exercise or a flight of fancy. To Ben and some of his former fellow university students though, this question demands a more immediate and practical answer as dozens of them suddenly regain the memories of their lives back on Earth upon reaching the age of nine in a new world.

"I will start an industrial revolution to increase the number of things I can build!" A young boy tinkering in his father's workshop.

"I'm gonna grow some arms, find my friends, and be the best big sister ever!" A strange owl on her journey out of a great forest.

"I will sculpt this strange new body and reach the pinnacle of fitness!" A former human coming to grips with her new gender and strange muscular body.

"I tried so hard in my previous life only for it to get cut short before I could reap any benefits. This time around, I'm taking it easy and enjoying myself." A surprising number of former post-graduate students previously on the edge of burnout.

"This isn't a game this time, I will shamelessly min-max my build as much as I can!" A handful of former Tabletop RPG players with varying end goals in mind.

Although their first lives were cut short by a natural disaster, a new beginning awaits them in the Growing World. Watch their first steps as they settle into their new lives and start gradually changing the world as it changes them in return.

Chapter 249 - A Gift Fit For A King

Dexic’s mouth hung open, her face completely slack as she stared at the sword in her hands.
Everett was tapping his fingers rapidly against his desk while he waited to hear what had caused his best warrior to act in such a way.
A few tears appeared and then rolled down the hardened veteran's face as she turned to Max and tried to offer the sword to him.
“I can’t… it’s too much… this…”
“No, it’s yours,” Max said as the woman struggled for words. “I made it for you. Today, you and I shall stand on that dirt before gods and people and announce that the Golden Axe Faction is not to be toyed with. Doing so will be met with consequences none will ever want to face.”
Dexic stared at Max, her eyebrows narrowing slightly as she shook her head for a moment.
“When… when did you become this man and not the boy I found in the adventurer's guild?”
Max laughed, causing her to lean back a little and peer at Everett who was wincing, still trying to understand how great the sword Dexic held must be.
“I was always this way,” Max replied. “I wasn’t this strong but everything I do is for my friends and family. I’m not here to be the best so I can make others bow before me or praise my name. All I want is to protect those who I care about. Sadly, in our world, the only way to do that it seems is by being the strongest and not backing down.”
Light laughter came from inside his mind, and Max ignored it.
Grunting, their Faction leader gave his desk a gentle slap and held a hand out toward Dexic.
“I’m dying… please, for the love of all, tell me what he made you.”
Coughing and clearing her throat, she shook her head and smirked.
Everett groaned again when he saw it and closed his eyes, tilting his head toward the ceiling.
“Perhaps afterwards I will. For now, I have something you want and that means more than Seth can imagine.”
Chuckling, Max stood up and rubbed his eyes. Moving to where his partner for tonight's event was, he gave her a squeeze on the shoulder and then motioned at the door.
“I’m going to lie down for about two hours and then I’ll be ready to go. You two can take turns seeing who wins the contest of finding out what that sword does.”
As he turned, Max stopped and glanced sideways at Everett.
“I’m going to need some more supplies soon, and I doubt you’ll find that a problem after you pry the stats on the sword from Dexic’s lips.”
Behind him, the tall woman started to laugh as Everett sighed.
***

“You two will follow me and the rest will follow the escort prepared for your Faction,” the guard announced as everyone piled out of the carriages Tom and Everett had secured for them.
“Be safe,” Tanila said as she leaned over, giving Max a quick kiss on his cheek before moving with the rest of the group that had traveled together.
“She really loves you,” Dexic said quietly as they watched their friends and family head toward the massive steps that led to the space reserved for Faction boxes. “It seemed impossible at first to believe an elf could really love a human, but her eyes tell me everything.”
Max’s smile grew as he nodded, glad to know others could see how they felt for each other.
A cough came, and both turned to see the pair of human guards, dressed in black plate and wearing the emblem of the two crowns on their chest in red.
The symbol for the queen's personal guards.
“If you two are ready, we will escort you somewhere private before your match.”
The tone wasn’t a request, and both nodded, letting the guards lead them through the growing throng behind.
Outside of the colosseum was a packed crowd and rumor was that with tonight being the last night and their fight being the culmination of the three-day event, no seats were left. Everyone who was anyone wanted to be inside to not only witness the blood duel but also get a chance to see the Elvish queen, Sylvandra Gilmenor.
“I never realized how many elves were in this city,” Max whispered as they followed the guards down the stone tunnel.
Light orbs dotted the walls and even though it was soon to be nighttime and not a window was present, the tunnel was well lit.
“There are more of each race and few of the very rare ones most never see in the capital,” Dexic replied. “If you ever get a chance to ride one of the great boats across the seas, you may be surprised by what you find over there.”
Max couldn’t help but stare at Dexic, who had her famous smirk plastered on her face.
“You haven’t been there, have you?”
She chuckled, ignoring one of the guards, who turned and glanced back at them before facing forward again.
“No, but I have seen the pictures one drew of the different groups there. The woman was talented and her paintings and drawings looked lifelike. Where Grace is from, we would be the rare one, light-skinned and all.”
Nodding slowly, Max considered the warrior Dexic was talking about and also Master Tang Mu. So much of his world was still unknown since he left his town. Even now and the things that he had accomplished in the tower were small when compared to everything else in the world.
“We are almost there,” one guard said. “You two will stay there until summoned, as both of us will guard the door.”
“Do you expect trouble?” Dexic asked, her hand flexing slightly.
“We do not, but one would not want to risk anything. It would look bad on the Queens if we did not provide the semblance of needing to guard you. As I’m sure you can tell, neither of us could stop you.”
Max said nothing but grinned. He could sense that these two had been in the tower at some point, but neither were exceptionally strong.
As they rounded a corner and started down another corridor, Max saw two pairs of doors being guarded by matching guards.
“More contestants?”
A snort came from the guard on his left.
“Those are both of your possible matches. It appears that the Elven Queen has yet to decide which pair you will face.”
Nodding, Max glanced at his partner who shrugged and frowned.
***

“At least the room is comfortable,” Dexic said as she plopped down on a cushioned chair. “I’ve been forced to wait in the rooms by the entrance of the fighting grounds and those don’t have a single cushion in them.”
Max nodded, inspecting the room and letting his sonar search every nook and cranny. Nothing stood out that there were any traps.
One day I guess my trap skill will actually detect something but perhaps it’s not as useful as I thought.
Pointing at the bowl of fruit, Max shook his head.
“I hope they won’t mind if I don’t eat anything I haven’t brought myself.”
Dexic laughed and closed her eyes.
“I doubt they would take offense to that. Only a fool would eat something they aren’t sure of where it came moments before what we are going to face.”
Max sat down and stared at the short-haired warrior until her eyelids opened up and those blue eyes looked back at him.
“What?”
Taking a breath and letting it out, Max pulled out a book.
“Can you answer a few questions about the tower and the floors you are on?”
Sitting up straight in the chair, she shook her head.
“You really want to ask me questions about the tower while we wait to fight for our lives?”
Nodding, Max tapped the pages with his pencil and grinned.
“I’m not planning on dying and getting a chance to ask you questions has always been almost impossible. Tom’s answers aren’t what I always want, and I know you’ll shoot straight with me. So why not pass the time helping me and my team prepare for what is coming?”
Nodding, Dexic’s eyes moved around a moment and then a well-worn book appeared in her hand. She grinned at seeing Max’s eyebrows raise.
“What? Can’t I have a journal as well?”
***
Flipping through the notes he had taken, Max considered the knowledge he had just gained.
“So after the fortieth floor, a few floors can be over a hundred miles long?”
Nodding, Dexic flipped through a few pages as she frowned.
“We had one that was almost that long and the thirty-seventh floor. The fortieth floor was a little over a hundred miles and the forty-first was almost that long. The worst part about the forty-first floor was the dense forest. It was always so dark and it took us two days to find the edge of the floor just so we could minimize the amount of sides creatures could attack us from.”
Max’s pencil moved quickly as he added a few more notes.
“Worst boss yet?”
Hissing as she sucked air in through her teeth, Dexic’s face scrunched up for a moment.
“I’m not sure anything could be worse than the Gorgon you supposedly fought, but we did have an elemental boss that required us to solve puzzles in order to damage it.”
She shuddered in her chair, not holding back whatever feeling ran through her.
“I lost two friends that day,” she said, her voice getting softer. “Sometimes the bosses can be bad, but the puzzles are far worse. When you can’t damage a boss because one needs to figure out a trick, people get hurt. You can only dodge so many fireballs, ice spears, and other attacks while trying to overcome a mental challenge.”
Nodding, Max winced for a second.
“We faced one of those. It wasn’t fun at all.”
Coughing, Dexic leaned forward and blinked quickly a few times before cocking her head and staring at Max.
“You faced a puzzle already?!”
“Two actually… floors eleven and twelve.”
“Ogre shite!”

Leaning back in her chair, the woman shook her head as she gripped the padded arms.
“That’s not something I wish on anyone that early on. Those things can–”
A knock on the door interrupted her and both stood immediately, changing their stances as they watched the door.
“Come in!” Dexic bellowed.
Slowly the door swung inward and a guard came inside.
“Forgive me for intruding, but the Queens have requested you both to come and talk with them for a moment.”
“Is this a request or an order?” Dexic asked as she watched the guard for reactions.
He cleared his throat just slightly and stood a little straighter.
“It would be better if you came on your own. I have been told to inform you that your Faction leader is there and waiting for you. Also the Elven Queen is in the same room.”
Max felt his heart race and could sense the change in posture when his partner heard those same words.
“The Elven Queen is there as well?”
A brief nod and the guard motioned toward the door.
“Will you come?”
Clearing her throat, Dexic nodded and motioned to Max.
“It would appear we have little of a choice, and I hate to admit that meeting Elvish royalty is on my list of things to do one day.”
Chuckling, Max moved first, knowing that he had already managed to check that box a few times.
As the door closed behind them and they walked between the two guards, Max sensed a door opening up where another pair of guards stood.
An elven head peered out into the hallway for a moment, turned towards them.
Scouting out the competition a little early… seems like a smart move.
Max couldn’t help but grin as he knew the one who had peered out had three earrings on one ear.
I guess the mage wanted to get a peek.

32 Chapter 250 - Before Three Queens https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1838739/chapter-250-before-three-queens 2024-10-08

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

One of my friends is launching today and I really wana help them get some views on their story! If you want - check it out!

Newly Broke Heroine! https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/95161/newly-broke-heroine

//discription

Chapter 250 - Before Three Queens

Both of the queens sat on matching thrones, watching as Max and Dexic entered the *room* the guard had discussed.

It was larger than the dining hall area of the Faction house and yet other than the two thrones and a large chair off to the side for the queen, no other place to sit was present.

A long table with an assortment of food and some masked acrobats that quietly changed positions, bending and hanging off of each other was the only distraction from the five people Max immediately knew were the real players.

Everett stood there, his gray hair fixed perfectly in a perfectly pressed black outfit, a pair of golden axes pinned to his jacket.

Next to him stood an older elvish man with white hair and in a long flowing gown. Each of the man’s fingers was decorated with a jeweled ring and he had two piercings in each ear.

The elves' silver eyes never left Max or Dexic as they entered the room. His face looked old even if there were no wrinkles and a single scar marred his otherwise perfect face, a gash along the left cheek.

Both of the twin sisters sat on the thrones, each having colored their hair. It appeared black. Their eyes followed the two of them as they strode toward them.

Dexic was struggling to walk, her eyes constantly shifting at the Elven Queen who sat on an ornate chair, gold hair and eyes lighting up where she sat. Bright red lips seemed out of place against her pale skin, and the woman appeared to be sneering as they moved toward Everett.

“Queen’s Macy and Molly, may I present warriors Dexic and Seth, members of the Golden Axe Faction.”

“Seth Pendal,” Macy said, her voice coming across sweet though every word felt heavy. “It has been a while since you last stood before us. It would appear you continue making enemies faster than most.”

Giving a deep bow, Max said nothing, ignoring the wave of force he felt itching to attack his mind.
“Oh please sister, you and I both know he seems unconcerned with that fact as the young man still hasn’t fled the capital and hid somewhere else,” Molly stated. “Besides, it would appear he has grown in power.”
Both of them licked their red lips, eyes twinkling as a red glow appeared for the briefest of moments.
A slight cough came from the elvish man, and Max watched as Everett fought back a smile.
“Forgive me,” their leader said with a slight bow. “Niccolo, may I present our two who shall face your champions later tonight.”
Huffing slightly, the elf spun and let his robes flare out. Like a dancer he moved, showing off the fine fabric that the red, green and white colors decorated.
“There is still time for you two to withdraw your insult and pay a fine,” Niccolo said, his voice already pompous and high as his nose lifted upward into the air. “We wouldn’t mock you too much if you both admitted the error of your path.”
Dexic scowled, but Max put a hand on her wrist and let out a chuckle.
“Usually when one asks for the other to withdraw, it means they have realized they are the weaker of the fight,” Max said, holding Niccolo’s gaze, watching those silver eyes throb and shake. “I guess we should allow you the same chance if you feel the loss of honor and respect you will suffer before your queen is what you truly fear.”
The room was silent except for a single gasp and grin that came from Molly.
Niccolo’s eyes went wide and the leader of the Faction that had sent so many to die by his hand trembled.
“Be still.”
The sound of Queen Sylvandra’s voice carried a hint of the tone Max had heard Tanila use before.
He smiled and gave a slight bow at the elvish woman who stood, her solid red robes gliding across the floor as if assisted by magic, revealing a very shapely woman that seemed in such a stark contrast to most elves he saw.
“A human who appears to have a mouth and a mind,” she continued. “It is rare for one so young to have such a thing, and yet I see in his eyes no concern for how I look. Just the opposite, in fact, from how the famed *golden warrior* I have been told so much about.”
Max didn’t need to look, letting his Sonar skill reveal that Dexic was frozen in place, her mouth open and eyes staring at the queen who commanded a powerful presence.
Niccolo seemed to be completely calm now, his eyes resting on the one that was gliding toward him.
Everett kept his eyes low, not looking at the woman as she passed, having already learned the warnings of allowing himself to be drawn in by her.
“Careful,” Queen Macy said. “Attempt nothing before the fight.”
Laughter that seemed like a cool drink washed over Max as the Elven Queen let out what sounded like true amusement. Even as she laughed, those golden eyes never left his, focused on him and how he stood there.
“I wouldn’t think to spoil the games and no matter the outcome, I am intrigued by how I *believe* this fight will end.”
The few seconds of silence as no one spoke seemed like ages as each person waited for someone to give in.
Waving his hand while sighing, Max shrugged.
“It’s a shame, really. I feel bad having to know we’ll end up killing two of your people. I actually enjoy most elves that aren’t bent upon my destruction.”
The slightest twitch came from the queen, only caught by his sonar, which revealed more than Max desired of Sylvandra’s body twitching under her outfit.
“Is that so?”
Silence came again, and no one spoke as Max and the queen locked eyes, the tone in which she spoke not hiding the displeasure she had for his words.

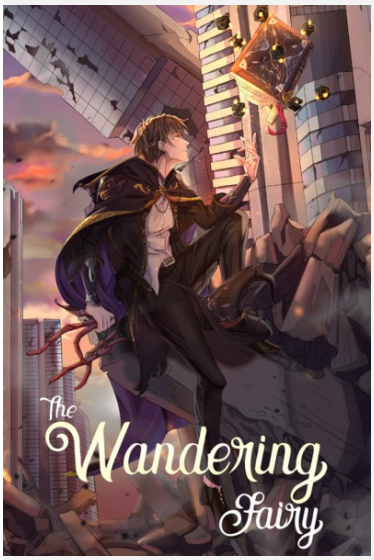
“Unfortunately yes. Even worse is I had really hoped to earn more money off this fight,” Max replied as he glanced past the queen and where Everett stood, head still down slightly, but the Faction leader’s eyes widening with every word Max said.
He knew I was going to do something. I’m just guessing this wasn’t what he expected.
“It appears even all the bookies in town felt the odds against your warriors weren’t worth the risk. Some said if it wouldn’t have been an insult, they might have made them one-to-one odds.”
Max saw Niccolo start to open his mouth but nothing came out as Sylvandra jerked her head forward.
“You dare to tell me to my face that you will win that easily?!”
Her voice echoed off the walls, and Max smiled as he kept his composure. He could feel each of the Queens sitting on their thrones leaning forward. There was a quickening of a pulse from almost every person in the room.
Tanila said she would react, and by the gods she is rising like cream!
Shrugging, Max motioned to Dexic, who was struggling to move or respond, her face not hiding the shock of his words as her mouth hung open.
“It’s true. I mean, how many have supposedly died by my hands? The rumors are almost so large now that some believe I could fight each of the ones you picked one on one without a break and defeat them all.”
A cough escaped Everett’s mouth and the speed at which Sylvandra’s finger moved almost surprised Max.
“Is that a challenge?!” she bellowed.
Max continued his performance, moving sideways away from the Elven woman and giving a slight nod to Queen Molly and Macy. Their eyes glowed and each of them was locked onto him.
“That would be up to the Queens. Surely the chaos it might cause in the betting pools would easily be resolved with only a few minor changes. I mean, after we defeat whatever pair you throw at us, I would gladly turn down any healing offered, wait on the floor and duel each of the other two, one on one. Again turning down all offers of healing between each match.”
Molly’s smile turned almost sinister as her white teeth appeared between those red lips, nodding her head slowly.
The Elven Queen turned, power radiating off her, golden hair continuing to rise off her shoulders slightly.
“Queen Sylvandra,” Molly said, her voice carrying a presence Max had experienced once before. “Do not forget where you are. A challenge has been issued. Will you accept?”
If those golden eyes were daggers, Max would have been attacked.
Several seconds passed before the golden-haired woman turned and nodded.
“Unless he wishes to add anything else to the challenge, I am ready–”
“One last thing!” Max said, interrupting the queen and watching as Niccolo almost came unglued, his forehead wrinkling so bad it aged the elf by a few centuries.
“I will wager twenty thousand gold on each of the three matches to be bet against the fighters from the Enlightened Souls Faction. If that wager is too much, then obviously they don’t have faith in their warriors and there is no need for me to bother wasting my time.”
A grunt look of concern flashed across Niccolo’s face while the Elven woman next to him bristled at the added insult.
“I accept!” she shouted, pulling her head back slightly when the volume of her voice reached her own ears.
“Then it has been witnessed and confirmed,” Molly quickly replied. “Guards, take those two down to the floors. Increase the guards and notify my personal attendant of the changes to tonight's bets. I have no doubt there will be some chaos in the coming moments.”
Max nodded and turned, ignoring the gaze that every eye in the room had locked upon him.

“Seth Pendal!” Macy called out, forcing him to turn and give a deep bow.
“Forgive me, my queen, I simply moved to obey your sister's order.”
She rolled her red eyes and chuckled.
“I must say, I now realize how much I missed you. The chaos and excitement you bring, its…” the Queen shivered and grinned, holding herself as she did.
“Intoxicating. May tonight's fights bring honor to those worthy of taking it.”
Giving one last bow, Max turned and grabbed Dexic’s arm and led her away as they made toward the doors.
***
“What in the gods have you done?!”
Max was grateful she had waited till they were locked into the room that looked out over the colosseum dirt floor. Announcements were already being made to the crowds about the changes to tonight's fight and from the sound of the people’s applause and cheers, everyone was excited at the potential two extra fights.
“What needed to be done,” Max replied as he pulled out a padded chair and placed it on the plain stone floor. “Sit and let me talk.”
“Sit?! You feel you can command me like a dog or some other weakling?! Do you forget who I am?!”
Sighing, Max shook his head and pulled out a second padded chair, placing it across from the first, and took a seat.
“No, I don’t, but we need to talk. Everything that is happening has been planned and only two people were allowed to know about it. Now sit if you will and I’ll share with you the plan.”
Grunts and frustration came as Dexic stared at the chair and stomped towards it. It took her a few seconds and a couple of breaths before she plopped down in it, crossing her arms and nodding her head.
“Everett only knew that I would attempt to goad Niccolo into more fights. Even he didn’t know about how I was going to poke the bear.”
“But she’s the queen!”
Waiting for Dexic to calm down, Max nodded.
“She is, which also means that Niccolo can’t override what she said. Had he been the one to accept my challenge, the queen could have undone it. Now there is no way to prevent the second two fights.”
“But no healing! Surely you don’t believe you can win without getting injured!”
“Oh, I’m not worried about that," Max said as he pulled a potion from his storage.
“The only rule was I couldn’t be healed by the healers. In her anger and fury, the queen failed to fix what I had said, trapped and unable to go back without losing face. From what I have been informed, if there is one thing Queen Sylvandra hates, it is to look bad.”
“And what happens if you actually win each of these fights? You’ll piss off the queen and her country!”
Max grinned and shook his head.
“Actually, I will look even better and those who seek to do me harm will need to seriously consider any more potential moves against me. Not only that, the one who will suffer more is the queen herself. From a close Elven friend, the king will not take kindly to how she handled herself or the fighters lost by her foolishness. Retaliation wouldn’t be wise as doing so would also lower King Savantus before Queen Molly and Macy.”
Dexic opened her mouth and though her jaw moved, words got stuck it appeared. Smiling, he waited, giving the woman time to see that what he had just done was a trap set long before the moment they walked into the colosseum.
“You knew we would stand before all three queens?”
Nodding, Max tapped his head.
“Again, I was told by a very close friend the queen cannot help but flaunt who she is. There was never a doubt we would meet.”
Sighing, Dexic rubbed her face with a hand and then groaned.
“So now what?”

Max leaned forward, a twinkle of something sinister in his eyes as he grinned at Dexic.
“We go collect some blood those elves owe to every human they have slaughtered.”

32-1 Chapter 250a - Hunting From Afar https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1838740/chapter-250a-hunting-from-afar 2024-10-08

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES



The Wandering Fairy [LitRPG World-Hopping]
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/94680/the-wandering-fairy

Chapter 250a - Hunting From Afar

This Max Hoste isn’t anything like those two bitches told me he would be...
Sitting in the stands, ignoring the jostling and shoving of every drunken fool that called out for blood, the hunter watched the one he had been tasked with killing.
“Can you believe it?!” the dwarf to his left shouted at him. “Seth Pendal is going to fight two more higher-level elves by himself! After he and Dexic kill the other two!”
Nearby people in the stands cheered and shouted while a few elves flung curses at the dwarf who held up his middle finger.
Everywhere was chaos and guards were occasionally having to remove those who ignored the rules of not fighting.
Something he hadn’t felt in a century went through his bones.
The Queens lied to me!
Yet the knowledge the boy had somehow survived his poison and continued to climb the tower left no doubt he was strong.
A black skill seemed impossible at first. Even the idea that the two queens believed this Max had a black skill seemed improbable.

A red skill would give growth like that... if one gave into it yet he shows nothing that would confirm giving into a skill completely.
Yet a black skill! That would devour and consume anyone's soul in a moment. The legends say that they will be able to destroy worlds and are almost impossible to stop! Nothing but a shell of a being, filled with a desire to feed off life.
A loud bell sounded, and the crowds began to cheer.
The large display above showed a timer of five minutes, and the first match was about to start.
Two Elven warriors were to be the duo that Max and this Dexic woman would face.
His skill told him that both of the warriors were level fifty seven and their stats were far beyond what the Dexic woman had.
Yet every time he tried to get a read on Max, it failed and the boy started looking around. The risk was too great, especially when the man had somehow sensed him on the street and then vanished upon going into the perfume shop.
“Did you wager anything?!”
Turning to the dwarf, who smelled like a barrel of ale that had sat open for a few days, he shook his head.
“I did not.”
“Your loss! You should put everything on Seth Pendal! That man is half dwarf after all!”
Some laughter came from the other dwarves nearby and he shook his head, wondering what joke he apparently was missing.
Whoever this Max Hoste pretended to be, time was running out for him to strike again. Every day, it appeared the boy continued to get stronger.
Watch and learn. Perhaps today I will find a weakness in his armor.
The bell tolled again and two minutes remained, and the stands grew louder as both pairs of combatants started to enter the dirt floor.

33 Chapter 251 - A Statement Written in Blood

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1840323/chapter-251-a-statement-written-in-blood 2024-10-09

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/94278/dungeon-apocalypse

Chapter 251 - A Statement Written in Blood
Dexic couldn’t help but chuckle as Max walked next to her.
The roar of the crowd was one thing, but the fact he had dyed his armor gold like hers was almost too much.
“We look like a pair of fools,” she shouted. “Why did you do that?”
“I told you already! Because I want everyone to know you are my family and I won’t let them touch you!”
A grin flashed across the woman’s face before her helm appeared. She waved to the crowd once before turning to watch the pair of elves Niccolo had finally selected as their first match up.

“I’m surprised by the matchup,” Max stated. “Solanci and Dorchaes are a powerful group of warriors and to risk their only set of warriors that can handle the fifty-first floor in the tower means something.”
“That they hate us?”
Chuckling, Max nodded and pointed at the duo.
“From what I know, they have both defensive and offensive skills. We’ll need to be smart. Go ahead and use all your skills, but also have some fun with that new sword.”
“You’re planning on holding off with yours?”
The look she gave him between the slits of her helmet couldn’t hide some concern.
“We’ll be fine. Trust me. Everything I know and all the training we have done spells one thing. Even better is what we’re going to loot from those two.”
A row of white teeth appeared, and Max grinned with his partner.
“Tanila had said those two would be outfitted to the gills, especially after the insult and challenge he gave. Whatever the Enlightened Soul Faction had worth taking was going to be on these four.
“If everything goes according to plan in one night, we are going to drain them of everything and it will take a long time before they dare to even look at us again.”
Max watched as the golden warrior stood a little taller, her shoulders held high.
[Simple Stat Check]
*****
Max Hoste
18-Year-old Human Male
Level 1
Exp 318/1000
Tower Experience: 30.00%
HP: 8805/8805
MP: 4850/4850
Stamina: 2935/2935
STR: 595
DEX: 537
CON: 587
INT: 485
WIS: 485
Defense of the Dragon - 14.5%
Defense of the Demon - 14.5%
Demon Essence: - 288
*****
They don’t have any idea what stands before them.
Chuckling, Max couldn’t help but agree with the voice in his head.
***
The protective dome was around them and the area they had to fight in had been expanded to a hundred yard wide section. All around it were healers waiting for those who might need it when the battle erupted.
“You’re certain we’re not going to move?”
Max nodded and ignored the sound of the announcer, who was giving one last attempt at working everyone up into a frenzy.
“Keep both swords out. Your dual wielding isn’t as good as your shield skill, but the stats you gain from both are going to be what matters. Whichever of the pair comes at each of us, you take yours out at the start. Get him to activate his defensive skills, then time your Power Strikes and finish him.”
Max couldn’t help but notice how she looked at him. Standing there with his halberd and shield, he looked more like a tank and less than one designed to do damage.
“Flipping roles like this might fool them, but then again–”
“Just kill yours,” Max said, interrupting her and pointing at the crystal above. “Three seconds and this starts. After that, let me have my fun.”
A loud sound rang out as the bell sounded and both of the Elven men, dressed in full plate armor, began their approach. Each had a shield and a sword that glistened in

the colosseum's light. Max could make out the faint glow of a magical enchantment that looked like the lightning element on the sword.
Smart move for the potential stun it might give.
Neither moved as fast as possible, yet Max stood there flat-footed, grinning as the pair approached.
At twenty-five yards the pair stopped, and one called out.
“Are you going to fight or stand there like a coward?”
“Dorchaes?!”
The elf shook his head.
“Oh, then you must be the coward I heard so much about!” Max shot back, grinning as the eyes of Solanci narrowed at him.
The elf said something and charged, moving slightly faster than his ally, who moved to where Dexic stood ready.
The sword that Solanci had moved toward him and Max deflected it with his halberd, beginning a dance that slowly turned the elven warrior from his friend.
Strike after strike, followed by attempted kicks and shield bashes came as Solanci tried to break through Max’s defenses, yet with the Dexterity stat he had, combined with Evasion and Sonar, it felt like he was battling a person ten tower floors or lower.
Each attack got faster and Max realized the elf had tried to see just how fast he was, slowly building up and moving towards his true top speed.
The sounds of the people watching filled the air even if the barrier helped to cut it down tremendously.
Sparks flew as weapons collided and Max continued his dance of defense, still grinning as he watched with his sonar Dexic land the first strike against Dorchaes.
The elf had used his defensive skill, stopping the first Power Strike the warrior had used. Her second offensive skill called out the rumored one that was supposed to be similar to his Evasion and once it was no longer active, Dexic’s next attack had taken off the elf’s weapon hand.
Her opponent cried out but Solanci couldn’t turn to assist, having just realized the boy he had expected to school and quickly kill wasn’t struggling at all to keep up, even when the elf finally reached his true combat potential.
A few more seconds passed and Max sensed Dexic land another attack, piercing the shoulder of the injured right side.
Every breath was a barrage of attacks, and Dorchaes couldn’t stand against the fury of the golden warrior. Her rage was being released as she yelled, seeming to earn the cheers of the crowd.
Solanci shifted, preparing to have to face both of them, and Max gave up space, letting the elf get an eyeful of his ally getting taken apart.
Ten seconds later, the sound of a head hitting the ground signaled the end of his ally and a look of fear peered out from under the silver and gold etched helm.
“Don’t worry,” Max said as Dexic put one of her weapons away and picked through the dead corpse, sliding rings off and putting other items into storage. “You and me. She will not help. This fight is so that every elf out there who thinks they can just roll over someone like me learns it won't always work out as they hoped.”
Solanci still waited, shock wearing off as Dexic pulled out a chair and moved back about ten yards after having stored the rest of the Elven corpse and sat down.
Max moved, his weapon a blur, spinning and striking as combination attacks came.
A hit with the hammer side turned into a kick against his weighted shaft, sending it upward with speed and force, knocking the warrior back slightly as his shield blocked the blow.
That led to a slice, and then a stab, followed by another combination that never ended.
Each attack had the elf on the retreat, backing up, sensing the strength behind each hit, realizing that the speed was coming faster than he could match.
Blood seeped out from the grooved section of his armor as Max setup attacks that put the elf out of position before the pointed tip quickly pierced and then came out, making sure to only cause a minor injury.

Time moved on and blood formed a line in the dirt as Solanci moved backward, hobbling from wounds to both legs and hips.
“I yield!”
Max shook his head, the smile gone, now a grim expression of one who had a job and was going to see it through no matter what.
“Death is the only escape.”
Those blue eyes of his opponent saw the blade, watched the weapon, lost track of where it was, felt his arms and shield get moved from the force.
A crunch came and the shield arm fell, the blade of his axe having cleaved the joint at the shoulder.
Blood gushed out, and the crowd roared with delight.
The elf had no more skills to call upon. They had been used dozens of attacks ago, only able to stop the onslaught for just a moment.
“Please! I–”
The words stopped as Max ended the fight. He wasn’t one to torture a person, but Tanila had said he needed to prove a point. If it had been his way, this would have been over within the first few seconds, but she was right.
Only one way would prevent the zealots within the elf faction from bothering him again, and this was how it needed to be done.
He would crush their spirits, destroy their champions and set them back so far they wouldn’t risk another life.
A cold wave of power filled him, and Max smiled.
[Consume has Consumed a Skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Current Skill]
[Power Stored for Future Use]
[Consume has Consumed a Skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Current Skill]
[Power Stored for Future Use]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a Skill]
[Would you like to learn [Protect Ally]?]
[Yes / No]
Grinning, Max selected yes as he stored his weapon and began to loot his fallen foe.
***
“So I take back everything bad I ever said about you,” Dexic said as she let Max walk her to the staging area. “I’m glad I never pissed you off after watching what you did to him.”
Shrugging, Max gave her a gentle shove and pointed to where the queens were sitting.
“Did you see the look on Sylvandra? She was absolutely horrified and both Queen Molly and Macy appeared to not remain as neutral as I had expected.”
Snorting, Dexic shook her head.
“Those two love bloodshed, and watching someone suffer through what you did is something each of them enjoys. If the Elven Queen wasn’t here, I would have expected both of them to summon you and shower you with a gift.”
Shaking his head, Max winced.
“I’ve been before them once and I’d prefer to never have to experience that again if I can get away with it.”
“We both know that won’t happen after today.”
Both of them halted as Dexic reached the edge of the grounds and a guard stood before them.
She turned and held out a hand, smiling as Max shook it.
“Go end this. Just remember, make sure they never forget our Faction’s name.”
Nodding, Max turned and strode toward the area where a pair of guards clad in red armor waited for him.
***
Across the ring was Daelina. Her red hair braid hung from behind her chained helm, and those green eyes shook as she watched him.

The crowd was roaring as the pair waited for the bell to sound and Max tried to not smile too much.
There were only fifty yards to fight in now and they were only thirty yards apart.
She had two swords out and Max could sense they shook slightly.
“Do you want it to be quick or suffer?”
Daelina jerked her arms at his question.
“You can’t be serious!”
Shrugging, Max pointed to the blood that trailed through the dirt off to the side behind him.
“I didn’t offer Solanci that choice. He was a message I sent to everyone who has attempted to hurt me or my family. You can’t escape, but I can make this quick.”
The elf spat on the ground and glared at him.
Tanila warned me about this.
“You think this will matter?! That Elven bitch that dotes on you will suffer! No longer will her disrespect to our king be–”
word,bell rang out, and before Daelina had said another word Max was in her face.
His hands gripped each of her wrists and he squeezed, hearing the bones shatter as the woman cried out.
Rage filled his eyes and his foot came down, shattering one of her feet and then the next.
“No one will dare to touch her!” he roared.
Both swords clattered to the ground and Max felt himself let go.
I cannot do what needs to be done or I may lose myself. If you want this moment, you may have it. Just let me not see what you do.
The voice in his head came and the chill of it almost made him regret those words.
I shall gladly teach these fools we are not ones to trifle with and that those you have marked as yours are protected.
Closing his eyes, Max let go.
***
It is done.
His vision returned and Max glanced down at the ground.
The body was gone from the soil and the dirt was littered with pieces of flesh, bones, and organs. Glancing at where the two queens sat he saw them both on their feet, clapping and cheering.
Pain in his heart forced him to turn to where he knew Tanila was. His eyes locked upon hers across the distance and she winced, nodding once.
Taking a deep breath, Max moved back to the starting place.
One fight left to go.

34 Chapter 252 - A Choice

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1841680/chapter-252-a-choice 2024-10-09

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Mercenaries of the Apocalypses [Fallout-inspired Progression Apocalypse]

The Augmentation technology failed to save humanity, but its power still rages through Andy’s veins.

Wielding his affinity weapon with devastating power, Andy must synchronise his AI implant to unlock the potential of his Gunslinger archetype. But in order to progress,

Andy must explore extreme apocalypse zones and conquer the dangers within. For a mercenary in an unforgiving wasteland, being a borderline psychopath has its perks–the only thing keeping him anchored to humanity is his sister, Clara.

When the mercenary duo land a lucrative contract with a powerful chieftain, they are pushed to their extremes. Haunted by mutated abominations and the demonic unknown, Andy and Clara must confront a terrifying truth: in this wasteland, some fates are worse than death.

Priority Alert: DNA compromised. Mutation detected. Emergency protocol initiated. Shutting down…

Chapter 252 - A Choice

Max couldn’t help but admire the stone-like expression etched upon the Elven woman’s face.
Her red hair and green eyes were locked on him.

Flowing robes of red and white hid her tall figure and multiple rings, earrings, and a red circlet decorated her. There was a wave of power that radiated off her.
Something that Max knew was far greater than what the woman before.
Unlike Daelina, the Elven mage Aria gave off a presence of true energy.
“I offered mercy to your friend. She denied it and insulted the woman I love. I will make the same offer but will do far worse to you if you make the same mistake when you speak.”
Max could tell his voice almost came across as a growl. If she was foolish enough to repeat the mistake as Daelina, she would suffer even more.
“I will not surrender, but neither will I disrespect the woman you obviously care about,” she shouted back. “Part of me would prefer to not stand here, but surrendering is not an option. One in my position must honor those above me. Just know I will hold nothing back.”
Max understood that most likely that her queen had given them commands and expected results. The only way out for either of them was by winning or in death.
“May Thuyja grant your soul kindness as you pass to the other side.”
The smallest of reactions was only noticeable because of his sonar skill, and Max recognized that Aria hadn’t expected those words.
Magic swirled around her as they waited for the bell and he pulled out his shield, sensing the growing power behind it.
As the bell tolled and Max moved, tendrils of flame came out from the woman’s weapon as a flaming staff appeared the second the bell rang.
Max had tried to cover the distance in an instant, yet the magic from the staff was faster, wrapping flames around him like rope, binding his body to the ground.
Pain from the fire came and the magic she had used was one he had not seen before.
[Regeneration]
Massive burns began to appear, and the skill seemed to struggle to keep up with the damage that was being done.
Standing there, unable to lift his weapon or shield, trying to drive with his legs that had tendrils of fire coiling around them, Max watched as Aria raised her left hand, a large fireball forming as an object he recognized floated by her side.
She has a familiar!
Slowly the elf mage backed up, putting distance between them as Max had removed twenty of the thirty yards separating them before he was immobilized.
The fireball grew larger and larger as the woman poured more and more mana into it.
His life wasn’t dropping as she might have believed, still at about ninety percent as the flames fought against the healing of his skill. They ignored his armor, somehow passing through and touching the skin.
Aria’s right hand appeared to be burning as well as she held onto the staff that was blazing like the sun. Massive amounts of light came from it as the flames grew.
Slowly his legs were able to move himself forward a step, falling behind her retreat as she continued pouring more and more mana into the spell.
Her eyes widened as the staff was engulfed, watching as Max managed a second step and then a third, the cords of flames somehow stretching, not holding him as she believed they should have.
Grimacing with effort, Max forced himself to smirk.
Aria’s eyes grew wider as the woman unleashed the fireball on him.
Pain came from the impact.
The spell was almost ten feet wide and Max had known the elf had most likely invested the majority of her mana pool into it.
Flesh melted away, a little bit of his skull appearing, yet Max took another step and then another.
His life had dropped to one third, which meant this combination of spells should have killed almost anyone else.
Max, however, wasn’t anyone else.
Fifty percent resists… How powerful will that become at the top of the tower? No… how powerful will I be?

“How?!”
Her shout would have filled his ears if the fire hadn't burned most of his ears away, but Max still smirked. He still had more hit points left than most people had in total that weren’t warriors at this level.
The flames began to vanish and the ground he had been standing on was smoldering, parts of the sand that had been in the dirt now turned to glass while the rest was blackened and crunching under his boots.
“It would appear you failed,” Max growled, his voice struggling from the damage to his vocal cords.
Aria’s right arm shook, the staff she held now vibrating and almost impossible to look at as the flames turned a pure white.
She screamed, tossing it down as the fire vanished, the wood that had once been there now gone, nothing more than a smoldering twig.
Immediately, the chains of fire that had been holding Max were gone, sending him forward a few steps as he broke free from their binding.
Regeneration continued to heal him as he moved, watching the mage scramble backward, pulling out another item.
She pointed a wand at him, and a bolt of fire raced toward him.
His shield came up, no longer held down by the tendrils of flame, blocking the spell and sending it washing over and around him.
Aria scrambled backward, finding herself pressed against the barrier as she unleashed another fire attack and then a third, tossing down the wand as it appeared to be out of charges.
Each spell washed over Max.
His face was back to normal, his bald skin glistening in the colosseum's light.
Panic filled the woman’s eyes as she realized nothing she did was having the expected outcome.
There wasn’t a need to race over. She was broken and whatever items her Faction had given to ensure victory lay discarded on the ground.
“One last chance,” Max said as he lowered his shield. “Surrender, and I’ll make it quick.”
He watched as Aria’s eyes darted to where the Elven Queen was at.
Turning his head, Max saw the woman was standing. Her hair and eyes seemed to be glowing and there was no doubt by her expression that she wasn’t happy at this outcome.
“I yield.” Aria’s voice was almost a whisper. “Forgive me… I had to try…”
Max turned back and nodded.
“Undress and leave everything on the ground. Do not try to hide any items or pull something from storage. Then I shall give you mercy.”
Aira now appeared to have no qualms about taking the easy way out. She deposited everything of hers on the ground, stood naked before the entire colosseum, and gave Max a nod.
“I am grateful for this act of kindness.”
A single tear rolled down his eyes as he moved to where she stood, bringing his hands up to her head and snapping her neck in a single motion.
Cold power flooded him and the notifications piled up behind the ones he had resisted checking after the last fight. For now, he had one last task to complete.
Gently, he lowered her to the ground, pulled a blanket from his storage, and covered her.
After that, he picked up her items and stored them.
Standing, he realized the crowd was silent.
Unlike all the other fights and the horrific way people found their end, this death had seemed to shock them from what they had expected. Everyone saw he had no anger or hatred for the woman.
He had defeated her.
He had broken her completely without launching a single attack.

She had agreed to his terms, and Max had given her a clean death. An exchange was made. Her body would return to her people whole, unlike the other before her.
As his name was called out as the winner, cheers erupted and soon the sound of his name echoed across the entire building.
Seth Pendal!
Seth Pendal!
Seth Pendal!
Waving once, he moved to where two guards waited for him.
“The Queens wish to see you.”
***
Walking through the hallway, Max took a moment and glanced at the notifications he had waiting for his attention.
[Consume has Consumed a Skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Current Skill]
[Power Stored for Future Use]
[Consume has Consumed a Skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Current Skill]
[Power Stored for Future Use]
[Consume has Consumed a Skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Current Skill]
[Power Stored for Future Use]
[Consume has Consumed a Skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Current Skill]
[Power Stored for Future Use]
[Consume has Consumed a Skill]
[Skill Consumed is Equal to Current Skill]
[Power Stored for Future Use]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Would you like to learn [Fire Familiar]?]
[Yes / No]
None of them were strong enough to give me a single point in a stat... only one skill...
Knowing Tanila would be glad his appeared to only be for one type of familiar and not the elemental one she had received, Max selected yes and felt the magical knowledge enter him.
A thread of fire seemed attached to him now. There inside was a connection to that magical element and he could sense it and knew that summoning this thing would become an extension of him.
The sound of boots in the empty hallway slowed down as they came near the place Max recognized from before.
Six guards in red armor stood outside, giving the pair that led him a nod before swinging it open.
***
“Who are you?” Molly asked, her eyes sparkling red as Max stood next to Everett.
Both he and Niccolo were present and yet Sylvandra had apparently either not been invited or declined the invitation.
“I am but a simple member of the Golden Axe Faction and a warrior who protects those who are his friends.”
The white-haired elf seemed ready to say something, but a wave of power washed over him.
“Who are you really?”
[Consume has Resisted a Skill]
Notifications continued to scroll for a moment until they stopped, and Max smiled.
“I told you who I am. Just someone who wishes to climb the tower and see how far I can get while protecting my family.”
Both queens reacted to how he spoke and the tone of his voice.

There was no shift in it from before and another wave of power came at him, this time from both of them.
“Tell us the truth!” Macy exclaimed, her eyes glowing red.
Everett and Niccolo both appeared to struggle to stand, while Max never flinched. Even the guards in the room who were nearby shook.
Taking a step forward and then another as if nothing was a threat, Max ignored the half dozen notifications that repeated the same thing as before.
[Consume has Resisted a Skill]
“I am just a warrior who wishes to not be threatened.”
Both of their eyes dimmed slightly and the pair of queens leaned back in their chairs slightly, mouths open for a moment, and then they glanced around the room.
“How?! How can you resist?!”
Macy’s outburst seemed to catch her sister off guard as the black-haired twin turned toward her sister and shook her head.
“I found a stone in the tower. It makes me immune to any form of mind control or attempts to override my will,” Max lied. “A handy thing for a warrior who doesn’t have to fear intimidation or other attacks like that.”
Macy opened her mouth again when Molly’s hand flicked out before her.
“Enough!”
Both sisters turned and gazed at each other and Max wondered what was taking place in that moment of silence as the two sat there for a few seconds.
Everett and Niccolo were both breathing heavily, and Max could feel the older men struggling to recover from whatever had emanated from the queens.
They are scared and now they are trying to decide on their next step. Each of them thinks they are the predator, but after watching you dismantle those elves with ease and now resisting their power which is what keeps them on those thrones, they must decide if making you an enemy is worth it.
Are we strong enough to stand against them?
You could strike them down right now. Doing so would make things very difficult, as you are not strong enough to truly protect those you say you love. Yet each woman knows that you defeated three tower climbers on your own and made it look like child's play. Whatever they decide, know you must play the path of one who is not interested in them or their power. That is how you protect your allies.
Max considered those words and knew his skill was right.
Now was the time to try and be an ally and content with what he had. Anything else would be a possible stone that might cause him to trip and lead to his friend's destruction.
“Queens Macy and Molly, if I may, perhaps I can tell you what I really am desiring at this moment and for the future.”
His words and tone caused the pair to turn, each with a mirrored expression of one eyebrow cocked low as they gazed upon him.
“Tell us, Seth Pendal. What do you desire,” Molly replied.

35 Chapter 253 - Crazy Tower Shite

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1843327/chapter-253-crazy-tower-shite 2024-10-11

Chapter 253 - Crazy Tower Shite

“I said honestly that all I desire is to climb the tower and grow stronger while protecting those I care about,” Max said, softening his voice and relaxing his stance.

“I don’t desire to deal with anything of the kingdom or those who enjoy the games that require daily attention to play.”
Both women smirked, but Max continued.
“Eventually, after the fiftieth floor, I am considering traveling on a great ship and seeing some of the other lands as Dexic has shared stories of what lies across the seas. Perhaps one day long from then I will return and take up my tower climbing, seeing if I can perhaps complete it or maybe I will stay over there.
“Just know the only thing I care about is my party and my Faction. To prove that, I promise to always be grateful to those who support the Golden Axe Faction. As a gesture, I will return a portion of the items we gained from the fights today as well as the remains of those we defeated in the coming week.”
Max turned slowly and gave Niccolo a glare that caused the older elf to take a step back.
“I will not seek any more retribution or actions against the Enlightened Souls Faction provided they no longer attempt to cause problems to members of my Faction. If, however, they do, I will publicly challenge them every month until either there is none left to fight, or they have lost their reputation that none will ever join again.”
Niccolo started to open his mouth but Macy raised hand froze him as if he was encased in ice, stopping the frustrated man.
“That seems like a fair offer. And there is nothing else you desire?”
“Just to be left in peace. You two have been gracious queens, providing me safety when I was weak and allowing me to grow into the warrior who stands before you today. I will always be grateful for that mercy and hope you know I desire no ill will toward you or anyone within your kingdom.”
Macy bit her lip slightly and Molly blinked rapidly a few times as the pair understood exactly what Max had just said.
Other than a grunt that came from Niccolo, no one else made a sound as the two women considered the options before them.
“Very well,” Molly finally replied. Max could see the narrowing of her gaze upon him and the tight muscles of her jaw as she spoke. “We are glad to see you have earned our kingdom some great renown and will ensure that the money owed to you is paid. A token of our well wishes will also be delivered in the coming week. Perhaps one day we may need your help again.”
Max bowed and smiled.
“I am thankful to be a citizen of Peltagow and its two queens.”
***
When the door shut on the carriage, Max saw Everett finally relax.
“Are you ok?”
The older man shook his head and wiped his face with a hand.
“You realize that we might have had to fight our way out of there had things gone differently?!”
Nodding, Max motioned toward the colosseum through the closed door.
“You and I both know that the time to hide is ending, and I need to make sure they don’t see us as a direct threat.”
“See you as a threat,” Everett corrected. “Still, watching Niccolo’s face and hearing him grovel before those two was almost worth my heart stopping a few times. I’m just glad they didn’t force me to talk. I’m not sure what would have happened.”
That thought had already run through Max’s mind and even Tanila didn’t have an answer.
“Regardless, tomorrow we’ll be entering the tower. There is no time to waste and something tells me that place is actually the safest spot for us right now.”
“You’re probably right. What about the loot you and Dexic acquired? What are your actual plans for it?”
Max pulled a bag from storage and held it out.
“You can go through it and then send back what I promised. Anything you find of value, just give our group first choice. After that, you get to do as you see fit.”
Taking the bag and making it vanish, the next question to come wasn’t a surprise.

“And the gold?”
Snorting, Max smirked as he rubbed his chin.
“We need materials for crafting. You saw what that sword did, and I want to try a few more things. Right now I can’t think of much we can really buy with gold. The real question is, are you willing to trade those crystals for materials?”
Everett stared up at the ceiling of the carriage before finally tsking his tongue.
“With the speed at which you five are bringing them in, I’m certain some of the other Factions will be more than willing to trade for a few.”
Leaning forward, the older man gave Max’s knee a gentle tap.
“After what you did tonight, I doubt any of the other Factions will want to say no to almost anything we ask for a while. Tom gave me a few pieces of paper before I had to be whisked away and after the second fight, a few reached out to him. As your third fight against Aria was about to end, two more sent notes. The truth is, you and your party may all need identity concealing items soon if you want to move around town.”
Frowning, Max saw the wisdom in that, but also hated how his new fame would affect his friends.
“One thing at a time, I guess,” he replied before sighing. “Right now, I just want to go check on the others. I’m afraid of how they might respond to that second match.”
Max saw Tom swallow at that statement and his jaw muscles went tight before he frowned.
“It was… needed, but not something I ever imagined you were capable of. How you continued doing what you did–”
“I don’t need to hear any more,” Max interrupted. “I went to a dark place and let go. The truth is I never want to do that again.”
“I understand. Rest then. Tom and I will manage the items you acquired and take care of everything else. Focus on your goal.”
Closing his eyes, Max took a deep breath and nodded.
Exhaustion at knowing how everything almost fell apart bothered him. Even worse was the sensation he had felt while in the colosseum.
Someone was watching me fight like they had at the tower and I’m just not sure who…
***
“Two more of those flying things! One more of those two wheeled bikes!”
Max wanted to laugh as Tanila called out the half goblin, half automaton creatures they kept facing.
Ever since they entered the thirtieth floor, things differed completely from the start. A massive landscape filled with tall buildings, some even taller than Peltagow’s castle dotted the landscape and these *planes* as his Engineering skill told him, were flying all over the city. The streets had goblins riding these bikes with engines that spewed black smoke, just like the planes did.
While both were bad, each equipped with arrow launchers, the harder to deal with ones were the goblins with backpacks that launched explosive bombs upon them. Getting to those brown and green creatures required getting past goblins moving inside ten foot tall automaton outfits that smoked and usually exploded upon being defeated.
“I got the planes!” Cordellia shouted as she unleashed arrows at the pair flying toward them, ducking behind the stone wall Tanila had created to hide behind.
A pair of bombs hit an air wall and Max watched as Tanila’s fireball finally struck the last one, causing it to explode into bits.
“Get the bike!” Fowl called out as he dealt with the last of the mechanical suits.
Grinning, Max raced forward, matching the speed at which the bike came, dodging the arrows it sent from the two tubes on each side, swinging his weapon and taking the goblin’s head off in one strike.
The bike swerved and crashed into a metal building, exploding and sending metal parts raining down around where it had blown up.

Spinning, Max had his bow out, sending a few arrows at the planes that were harder to hit with spells because of their speed and distance, watching as one started spiraling toward the ground, black smoke marking the path of its doom.
What kind of crazy shite did the tower create this time...
***
“Nothing to salvage again,” Fowl complained. “Everyone of these things explodes. Even when you kill the goblin with a single blow to their head. It’s like whatever they have on them is connected and suddenly *booom* !”
A few chuckles came as Fowl mimicked an explosion.
“What are you thinking?” Cordellia asked as she saw Max studying the street they were fighting on.
“These streets are four times wider than they should be. I’m guessing it's because of the planes that come out from the buildings along it.”
He pointed at the door that had opened, revealing an empty storage space that one bike had come from.
“Other than experience and these orange gems, we aren’t getting a single thing worth keeping,” Max continued. “Based on what we could see from the start of this floor, we are probably going to be here for at least a full day.”
“Does that mean we are camping?” Fowl asked.
“Maybe. Dexic told me the thirtieth floors start the longer versions and I think she was right. Based on these buildings and the math I’ve been doing, this floor may be thirty to fifty miles long.”
Both dwarves spat and Max saw Tanila frown.
“We’ll be fine,” Tanila said. “One fight at a time.”
***
Eight hours of steady fighting had taken them further into the tower floor and Max shook his head as he waited for Regeneration to heal the injuries he acquired from the robotic suit that exploded near him.
“Still nothing?”
“No stat or skill gains,” Max quietly informed Fowl. “They aren’t that strong. Mainly it's the explosion and numbers of enemies that come. I know most groups can’t do what we can, which means fighting seven or eight at a time should be difficult, but it’s not.”
“Which means the real question is what will the boss on the thirty-fifth floor be?”
Nodding, Max pointed at a pack of goblins moving down one street.
“Correct. Now tell me you see that one of those goblins is different.”
Fowl raised a hand and peered at the pack Max had pointed out.
“One of them isn’t just in a robot suit, as you call it, but also has an enormous pack on its back.”
“Which means we just found a new enemy.”
Fowl groaned and then sighed.
“Looks like you should go first then.”
***
“Now!”
Max’s fireball, along with Tanila’s and the arrow from Cordellia, all flew at the new goblin they were facing. As their spells and attack hit at the same time, a ground shaking explosion took place.
Flames much larger than the ones they had sent erupted from where their target had been, covering the street and the other goblins nearby.
Screams of pain and suffering came from seventy yards away and for over a minute, the flames never let up until they finally vanished.
“What in the gods was that?” Fowl asked.
“Beats me, but I’m glad we didn’t let it get close,” Cordellia said. “Did you see how long those flames burned and how hot they appeared to be?”
“Okay, new plan. Anytime we see one of those, we kill it first and stay back.”
Everyone nodded in agreement.
No one wanted one of those to get close and blow up.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Hey all! Good news!

Book 5 is drawing to a close soon, ending on RR on 10/26. For those who can't wait, it ends this week on my Patreon. (will be live on Amazon Nov 1st).

Book 6 is ready to rocks (got edits back this morning! Now I just got to go through them all...) (be prepared... be very ready for what's coming)

Book 7 is in the works and man i'm loving the story.

On a side note, my publisher, Mango Media is owned by Selkie Myth - Author of Beneath the Dragon Eye Moons. He just put book 13 up on amazon so if you want to binge read 13 books, go give it a view!

36 Chapter 254 - Goblins and Fire

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1844956/chapter-254-goblins-and-fire 2024-10-14

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Saved for Dragon Guy

Chapter 254 - Goblins and Fire

Flames almost as hot as the chains that Aria’s staff had created, burned the flesh from Max’s skin, causing the pain of it all to blind him for a bit.

Regeneration was keeping up and Batrire’s heal had him in a great spot health wise but for the last forty seconds since the new goblin had dropped from a building up above and onto where everyone was, Max endured the pain that came from running and leaping upward, grabbing the creature and using Demonic Teleportation to remove it from its attempt at detonating on the three women.

As soon as he and the creature hit the ground, it exploded, covering a good twenty yard circle in flames.

Leaving that area had taken a moment as Max gathered his whits. Now he stood outside the circle, still on fire.

Ice Nova had not stopped the flames nor had the barrel of water he tried to douse himself with.

Some magic cannot be put out by normal means. Whatever this is, it isn’t just magic but a combination of magic and items.

His skill confirmed the thought he had been debating as the fire ate away flesh and muscle, again and again as his skill healed him. It was like the acid except hot but not near as life threatening.

Finally, the flames vanished and his body immediately felt normal as a heal came once more from Batrire.
“Seth!” their healer cried out
Everyone came rushing towards him, having taken out the other goblins that attacked.
“I’m okay,” Max said as he touched his face, his gloves vanishing for a moment as he made certain he wasn’t too ugly to look at.
“You saved us!” Batrire exclaimed. “Had that landed in our midst, we would have been burnt to death.”
Fowl gave him a gentle slug to the arm and nodded.
“It’s my job, and I know everyone here would do the same for each other. Besides, now we know they can come from those higher buildings,” Max replied, waving off their praise. “We’ll need to fight closer to the middle of the street and I’ll try to keep an eye out on above.”
Snorting, Fowl shook his head.
“Always thinking about next time instead of how we barely survived this time. Are we still wanting to keep going or do you have some idea on when we should try to camp?”
“Let’s get about four or five more hours in and see where we are. After that we can find one of these openings the bikes create when they leave the building.”
Max noticed Tanila motioning to him to follow her for a moment away from the group.
Resisting the urge to sigh, Max followed expecting he knew what was coming next.
“You’re focused on pushing through at a fast rate,” Tanila said. “I know you want to make certain we are stronger to try to protect us, but don’t forget, we won’t be there in a week or two. This journey is supposed to take years, if not decades.”
Max could feel the other three watching them and heard Cordellia ask if he was going to ever relax again.
“I’ll try… I really will,” he replied. “Just… you saw your mother and I have no doubt that eventually that bridge will come tumbling down and I can’t risk any of you. Especially you.”
She smiled and nodded, moving close to him, and gave a quick kiss on his cheek.
“I know… but don’t forget who you are. I won’t push, but what happened on that floor… it has changed you.”
Sighing, he nodded slowly.
It did change me… why?
No reply came but even without his skill telling him, Max knew the weakest point in his armor was Tanila. If someone intentionally hurt her to get to him he would burn the world down, selling his soul along the way.
“I know… I’m working on finding myself again. Just give me a few days or weeks. I can’t promise it will happen overnight, but I’ll get there.”
She nodded and then motioned to the others who came to where they stood.
“Well, you heard our leader,” Tanila said, her voice now mocking the title Max hated. “Time to keep pushing on till he lets us sleep.”
The air changed as everyone laughed and prepared to find the next group of goblins in their path.
For a few minutes, everything was almost like it had been before the previous night.
***
Fowl yawned as he waited on Batrire’s heal.
“Two of those exploding at the same time actually hurts.”
Max nodded and stored his bow, taking in the carnage they had just waded through for the last twenty minutes.
They managed to sleep without any incidents, and until about two hours ago the progress had been like the day before.
“We just need to find out why those other groups are coming with the one we pull,” Max said. “I scouted and didn’t see them but like all the last few major fights, a few extra doors are open which means they are hiding in the buildings.”
Fowl grumbled and nodded as the others moved to where they were standing.

“You two complain too much,” Batrire stated. “With your ability to heal and Tanila’s mana regeneration we haven’t really had any issues. Even those self detonating goblins manage to take out a few of their own since we destroy them early on.”
“I know. It’s just not a good thing when we fight forty or so in a row, even if the experience is good,” Max replied.
“Oh, it's good. Real good,” Fowl said as he grinned.
“We’re ready when you are,” Cordellia said as she nocked an arrow.
Nodding, Max moved ahead of the group, preparing to find their next victims.
***
Seven more hours ended as they arrived at a massive half dome, four hundred yards high and made of patchwork metal sheets.
Underneath the dome the portal sat at the end, almost a half mile away.
Leading to the portal were rows of raised barricades, with packs of goblins scattered behind each one.
“Those barricades are like fifty yards apart,” Tanila stated as she pointed at the portal. “The worst part is I don’t see any of the ones that blow up when you get near or kill them.”
Everyone could see about forty airplanes circling up above, black smoke trails following behind them, the constant drone of those engines and the occasional sputter easily heard.
More of the robot suit goblins were moving around behind the seven rows of barricades.
“There has to be almost three hundred of them there?”
“Is that a question or a statement?” Max asked Fowl who gave him the middle finger.
“You know that was a question! If it’s not gold, we both know I struggle to count that high.”
Smiles appeared even as the group tried to consider the options for getting to the portal.
“Feels like another one of those floors like the bee,” Max said. “I can see a path and have no doubt I can run past all these goblins before they can respond. My biggest fear is what might be hiding and all those barrels stacked on top of each other near the portal.”
Cordellia squinted and snorted.
“You can see those? Maybe Fowl is wrong and you’re part elf too,” their ranger stated. “I noticed them but thought nothing about them till now.”
“I’m all for getting carried out here if you want to run,” Batrire said. “I have my barrier and with how fast you move, we can easily reach the portal long before it runs out.”
Max nodded, his eyes still focused on the barrels.
“What is it?” Tanila asked.
“I’m the only one who was fortunate enough to get close to those goblins that explode in flames. In the back of the mech was a barrel that looked similar to the ones stacked there. Part of me fears a possible trap, but the other part of me wants to try to steal one or two.”
“So you would run with us, toss us in the portal and then try to grab a few before exiting the tower floor?”
Max nodded at Tanila, who then sighed but shrugged.
“Why not? You’ve done crazier things before.”
Everyone grinned and even Max smiled, knowing they were right.
“Alright. Let’s get set, I want to get you all safe and if I feel I can still make it, I’ll grab a couple.”
Everyone moved into position while Fowl held out his arms, holding his shield before him.
“One day we need to come up with a name for this,” their dwarven warrior muttered. “That way you can just call out ‘Dwarven Express’ and we’ll all know what to do.”
As Max finished putting Tanila on top of Cordellia he chuckled.

“You’re right and I probably need to get a harness made so I don’t have to worry about anyone falling off.”
***
Once they were all set, Max raced toward the first barricade, judging the distance, and jumped well beyond the first line of defenders.
A shout came and then an alarm sounded as horns around the top of the dome blared out an ear piercing sound.
The planes began to descend, but none of them were fast enough to react as Max was already past the third barrier and closing in on the exit with each step.
Goblins flew past him as he moved, many trying to turn and focus on him, yet most couldn’t rotate fast enough to keep track as he ran.
At the sixth barrier, the wall began to rise, appearing to attempt to stop the group that was almost past all the defenses.
Summoning an air wall, Max jumped off it, leaping above and beyond the wall, angling toward the last one that did not appear to get taller.
The groan Fowl made as they moved almost made Max laugh as he angled toward the portal.
Having gotten closer to the space between the last barrier, Max felt a skill go crazy. Red areas on different pieces of metal appeared and everything inside told him if he stepped on those, life wouldn't be good.
[Trap Detected]
[Trap Detected]
[Trap Detected]
[Trap Detected]
[Trap Detected]
[Trap Detected]
A flood of over fifty notifications flew by and Max had to summon an earth wall to adjust his intended path, hitting it harder than he wanted and jostling everyone he carried.
“TRAPS!”
Max felt everyone tighten up as he slowed his pace, dancing along the metal floor, avoiding areas he knew would set off something most likely not good for their health.
Explosions sounded behind him as the first line of defense sent their explosive projectiles this way, most of them striking the sixth barricade that had risen.
Leaping sideways, Max squeezed Fowl and the others as tight as possible, wishing for a harness or extra body mass so that he could grip them better. There was still almost four hundred yards until the portal was in range.
The sound of plane engines struggling to gain speed and come toward him sounded like an angry buzz, filling the moments of silence between the blaring alarm.
Dodging left, then leaping right, Max weaved his way across the floor as more traps appeared as he got within range.
This close, he could see the slightly raised section of the floor, noticeable now but before something one would have missed if not looking for it.
An ice spear formed above him as he ran for a moment and then was gone, sent behind by Tanila as she defended his back.
The distance vanished as each step and leap covered ten to twenty yards easily, going slower so he could land where he needed to.
As the portal came near, Max sensed arrows flying toward them and then an air wall stopped the attacks from striking his group.
“Hold on!”
Touching down near the portal, Max immediately tossed Fowl into it, ignoring the scream that came from his dwarven friend. Catching Batrire as she shifted from the move, Max grabbed her with one hand and spun, sending her into the portal right after her man.
“Forgive me!”
A scream that almost reached the same pitch as Fowls escaped Tanila’s throat as she was flung into the portal.

Two seconds later Cordellia was sent out of the tower and Max tried to not pause as the sight of over a hundred goblins rushing toward him and the dozens of airplanes that were headed in his direction.
Forty yards away in each direction were hundreds of the kegs he wanted to steal.
Dashing from the portal, Max summoned an ice wall. As he reached the first row, he began grabbing them and storing the first two immediately.
The next pair he tossed across the area at the incoming goblins, moving along and already having stored four more before Max's projectiles were halfway to his target.
Arrows began to rain down all around him and Max summoned his air wall once more, preventing an attack that wasn't aimed at him but the barrels near him.
Shite! They're trying to blow me up now!
Dozens of explosive charges were flying towards the wall of barrels, and Max knew only seconds remained as he pivoted and sprinted back toward the exit.
Ten yards from the portal, the first explosive charge hit and a *whoomp* sounded in his ears, a massive heat immediately reaching his back.
Behind him, the greatest display of destruction began as barrel after barrel ignited in a domino effect.
[Demonic Teleportation]
Time wasn't on his side and as he touched the portal the brightness of the orange glow around him was almost blinding.

37 Chapter 255 - Robotic Parts

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg/chapter/1846860/chapter-255-robotic-parts 2024-10-14

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Runeblade: A Delving LitRPG Survival Adventure

Kaius just wanted to unlock his class - instead, he restarted the apocalypse.

After years of training, Kaius has barely acquired the first two of his family's legacy skills. Powerful and vanishingly rare, the method of creating them is a secret people would kill for.

Now they might be the only thing that keeps him alive.

Narrowly surviving a bandit ambush, he gets trapped in the Great Depths- a world spanning dungeon. To escape, he will have to slay one of the Guardians that defend the exits; a feat no one without a class has survived. Ever.

If that wasn't bad enough, if he succeeds he will reignite a forgotten trial that nearly ended civilization.

Chapter 255 - Robotic Parts

"So how many barrels did you get?"
"Six," Max replied, finally answering the question Fowl had asked two times already. "Part of me wishes we had been there with Batrire's protective shield up because I'm not sure anything was left alive when I got out."
A groan came from their healer as the carriage made its way from the Tower.
"I'd prefer not to risk it, especially since I'm not sure how much damage it can absorb before breaking."
Nodding, Max saw Cordellia pulling a few of the gem pouches out as she started handing them to everyone.
"There are, I think, one hundred and thirty-three in each pouch. At this rate, we should hit the level forty cap before we reach the boss floor."
"We need something to replace the lack of loot," Fowl muttered as he reached in and pulled an orange gem out, crushing it between his fingers.
"Are we going to still do the next floor tomorrow?"
Everyone looked at Max after Batrire spoke and he shrugged.
"We have all our skills ready. I'm uncertain what the next floor will be, but these weren't that strong compared to the other floor."
"Or you're just too strong," Tanila stated. "Regardless, if we are going to do the floor tomorrow, I want to turn in early. Sleeping in a tower isn't as restful as one might think."
Grunts of agreement came, and Max nodded.
"I'm fine with that. We can eat and turn in. There are still four hours of light left in the day and I know three people in our Faction who will want to inspect one of these barrels."
***
Max nodded and waved, shaking a few hands as different Faction members saw him and congratulated him on the success in the colosseum, ignoring the way Tom rolled his eyes each time they were stopped.
Eventually, the trainer dragged Max away from the members and to the room he had requested.
Behind a thick stone wall, the four watched as one dwarf handled the barrel in another room through the reinforced glass section of the wall.
"Hopefully that suit will protect him," Tom mumbled as the dwarf in a shiny fire resistant suit undid the top of the barrel. He dipped a thin test tube inside and withdrew a small amount of the liquid, placing it on in a metal rack before sliding it through a hole in the wall that led to another room.
The breath of relief Alfreda let out when nothing bad happened told Max just how tense that moment had been. The group of four then moved to the next windowed area to watch the two Elven alchemists take the rack and tube from the transfer box.
"After our last problem with explosive materials, we needed to upgrade our area some," Alfreda said, doing her best to whisper, so Everett didn't hear.

No one said anything as the pair of elves began siphoning off smaller amounts of what was given to them and slowly combining in different boxes with exhaust systems that left the room.
They moved along the row of twelve tests they had, pushing a lever which combined something into the small amount.
Max and the others jumped slightly when a minor explosion roared in the fourth box, sending flames up the exhaust area.
“That is an organic activated liquid,” Alfreda stated. “The other three didn’t–”
Another explosion rocked box five as the next object was combined.
“Uh… I’ll wait, I guess, till they finish.”
Two of the last seven boxes all had a reaction and when the elves were finished, they watched as Alfreda made writing motions. Each nodded and began cleaning up the room they were in.
“So what does that tell us?” Tom asked as he saw the older Elven woman writing some things down in a journal she had pulled out.
“That whatever is in that stuff is dangerous. That stuff shouldn’t be in his possession before level forty at the earliest. It ignites when it comes in contact with any type of organic material like skin, hair, meat, plant, etc. Dirt won’t set it off.
“Also, anything with a slightly higher than usual heat signature could set it off and electricity causes the worst explosion,” Alfreda said as she wrote quickly. “Finally, water doesn’t extinguish it, but there should be some materials we have used before which will snuff the fire faster. For now, I wouldn’t leave that barrel out as the potential to cause extreme damage is too great.”
“Why are you grinning like that?” Tom asked when he turned and saw the massive smile Max wore.
“Honestly, this stuff is pretty amazing, even if it's super dangerous. Blunt force will set it off if it's enough. The fact it hurt goblins and burned them was a perk. Sometime down the road, these may pay off.”
Nodding slowly, Tom flipped a gold coin to Everett, who smirked.
“I told you,” the Faction leader said as he caught and pocketed the coin.
“Yeah… Seth always likes to use stuff as weapons. I shouldn’t have taken that bet.”
Chuckling, Everett handed Max a piece of paper as they turned and left Alfreda, who was still focused on the results of the tests in the room.
“That has the list of things worth keeping from the three you defeated. Based on what I know, only four of the items really fit your team's needs.”
Tom grumbled as he walked behind them, muttering, *gear better than anything I ever had,* not knowing Max could hear him.
Scanning the list, he nodded.
“I’m sure that Cordellia and Tanila will want some of this jewelry, but the rest of it isn’t worth anything.”
A cough came from his trainer, and Max held up his hand.
“I mean, someone here can obviously use it but with what you both know I can make or the stats of a few of our items, we might replace this sooner than later. Even Fowl might only need one piece of armor.”
“You realize you are turning down…” Everett paused and made sure no one was within earshot of the three, “an item that grants a percentage of stats.”
“I do, but for now, trust me when I say as much as I want to take one of those rings, I would prefer to let the rest of my team have them. Down the road, I may come back and ask for it.”
Max had done the math in his head and even though he still wore the first ring that gave only one point of dexterity, it served as a reminder of where all this started. As his stats grew, those percentage based rings would provide more stats if the jewelry they collected didn’t scale.
“Well then, just have someone come by and pick them up later. From the bags under your eyes, I’m guessing you will be turning in?”
Max nodded at Everett and found himself yawning at the acknowledgment of exhaustion.

“How do you manage those week and month long grinds in the tower? One night seems almost impossible sometimes.”
Tom scoffed and shook his head while rolling his eyes.
“You haven’t even suffered yet. That maze was the first proper introduction to a long tower floor stay, and you weren’t having to fight. Our worst time was almost two months and if we slept more than an hour at a time, it was utter bliss. Waves of monsters kept coming and we couldn’t retreat as no one knew just how much further we had to go.”
“But the experience was amazing,” Everett stated. “We gained more levels in that one grind than we ever had on a single floor.”
Nodding his head, Tom had the tiniest of smiles as he gazed off somewhere for a moment.
“I remember getting so hungry we were cooking the meat of the creatures we killed. After that we made sure to pack enough food for a three-month trip.”
Max felt himself wince as he realized they only had enough food for maybe two weeks.
“I guess it’s time I upgraded our storage as well,” he replied. “But for now, there is some warm water and a soft bed with a beautiful woman waiting for me.”
Both men laughed and waved as Max left the room.
***
Fowl snorted as they stood outside the tower entrance.
They were the fourth one in line as, for some reason, nine groups had been waiting to enter this morning from different factions.
Acknowledgements came from everyone but the group of elves that were two spots before them.
“It appears we are with a celebrity,” Fowl whispered. “Perhaps I can sell some of his used equipment for gold.”
Batrire snorted as Max groaned.
He had been trying to deal with the changes his and Tanila’s plan would bring. The recent rise of fame had been so bad that he used his appearance altering jewelry when headed out of the Faction property.
“It will pass,” he replied. “For now, focus. We don’t have any idea what we’ll face today, and I want to make sure we’re ready for it.”
“What happened to the fun-loving guy?” Cordellia asked as she winked at Fowl.
“Always cracking short jokes and pretending life was just one good time after another.”
“He grew up,” was their dwarf warrior's response. “It is a shame.”
***
“Well, that’s not what I expected at all,” Fowl stated as they peered at the large opening in the black dirt.
Dozens of ants ran around the outside, moving towards another hole about a hundred yards off. These ants, however, were part ant and part metal creation. Some had metal legs like the automatons, a few had a robotic head and one was a bright red color with an extremely large appendage on the end. Each was at least five feet tall, with the metal heads being almost seven feet in height.
“Ants… again,” their ranger said with a sigh. “Which means we’re going underground.”
Max nodded and readied his halberd.
“We might be able to only get six if we wait till the ones moving are further away. Focus, the ones with the automaton heads first.”
“Ready when you are.”
Tanila’s statement was all Max needed as he motioned to the one Fowl would toss a rock at.
“Seven!”
Fowl’s stone had aggro'd two with the metal heads and five of the ones with robotic legs.

Immediately, the difference in speed was noticeable as the five ran past the larger and slower pair.
“Rooting!”
“Shooting!”
Two of the faster ants were stopped in place, large roots rising up around their legs and an arrow from Cordellia caused her target to find a chunk of its face missing, purple gore splattering everywhere.
As it screeched, crashing against the ground, the other two came right at Fowl who was swinging his hammer and banging his shield.
Max sensed Tanila’s ice spear and quickly cast his fire elemental, ready to use it again.
The first ant struck Fowl, screeching in pain as the thorn aura caused a purplish blood to gush from the wound.
Swinging his weapon, Max found the blade cut right through the outer exoskeleton with ease, tearing through the shell and causing its head to fall sideways, still attached by a few ligaments and chitin.
The pair of metal heads were almost upon them and Max moved to the side, giving Fowl a chance to get aggro while he prepared to unleash a Fire Nova.
An ice spear tore through one of the rooted ants, almost looking like someone had run a stick through its entire body before it fell dead.
Two seconds before the larger ants reached their dwarven warrior, he had brained the faster ant, snapping off an antenna and moving to intercept the pair as Cordellia finished off his foe.
A pair of three foot wide mandibles opened up, clamping down on Fowl’s shield, gripping it tightly.
One second it was holding on, fighting against the dwarf’s strength, and a second later a glow came over it.
The next moment Fowl was off the ground, still holding onto his shield but now spinning like a top as the pair of robotic mandibles spun.
Faster and faster they twirled, bringing a cry of surprise and a call for help as their tank was a few feet off the ground, a blur of plate mail against the ant’s head.
Max didn’t wait after seeing what had happened, racing toward his target and delivering a solid hit to the rushing large ant.
Gong!
The impact of his axe against the side of the insect's face created a loud sound of metal on metal and it caused the ant to stagger back, a crack having appeared in a part of the metal while purple and green goo came from it.
Surprised by the fact the head hadn’t been cut cleanly, Max moved with a speed his ant couldn’t keep up with, taking off the legs instead, causing the insect to find itself unable to stand as the weight of its head brought it crashing to the black dirt.
Fire Nova went off, sending waves of flames across the ground three times, the smell of burning insects filling the air.
Three steps brought him to where Fowl continued to spin around like a toy at a fair.
[Power Strike]
One hit obliterated the head, sending both it and Fowl crashing into the dirt where the pair bounced and rolled around until the momentum was lost.
Cursing could be heard though not understood from their dwarf warrior.
Another spell and a few arrows ended the rest of the ants they had to face, allowing the group to move to where Fowl was, dirty and slightly banged up, puking his entire breakfast out.

38 Chapter 256 - Perks of Being Max’s Friends

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Chapter 256 - Perks of Being Max's Friends

"How did that pick you up? Why didn't your armor's ability keep you from moving?"
"I have no idea," their warrior stated, color finally returning to his face. "One moment I felt like I was stuck to the ground, the next I relived that dwarf on ice moment."
Fowl didn't want to discuss his recent ride any more as he washed off with a few flasks of water.
Max and Tanila studied the head that had been cleaved off, seeing a system of gears, pistons, and a jewel inside the metallic head.
"What else are we going to face?"
Max sighed as he picked up the head and stored it.
"I do not know. Until the previous floor, I didn't know one could do this with engineering or whatever this is," he replied, motioning at the ants with metal legs.
"Everything about this feels weird, and Everett and Tom both said that nothing like this has been reported before in their records."
"Which means it has to do with just you."
Bobbing his head, Max frowned.
"No stats yet either which makes me wonder what I'm maybe missing."
His book was out and Max showed Tanila a few lines.
"I'd expect the stats to be somewhere around the two hundred and fifty range or so but I can't tell. None of these things are smart or fast enough, I guess to grant me a stat increase. My other question is, does the equipment or robotic parts they have change what I can get from them?"
"Like a magical item granting bonuses? Tanila asked, her eyes widening slightly.
Grimacing, Max shrugged.
"Maybe. For now, all we can do is finish the tower floor and see what we find. Hopefully Fowl won't play around like that anymore."
Redness filled her face as she snorted, unable to keep herself from laughing.
***
Five ants came as they pulled the ones outside from the opening closest to them, one of the metal heads getting rooted along with the one with the enormous metallic abdomen.
The three quick ones died easily and Tanila sent an ice spear at the newest one they faced.
As the spell tore through its body, the party found themselves knocked back even though they were fifty yards away, a large crater where the ant had been immobilized.
Half of its ally with the metal head was gone, bodily fluid gushing out from the back, half that was missing.
"WHAT WAS THAT?" Fowl shouted
"WHAT?" Batrire replied
Fowl started to yell again when Max held up one hand while the other was pressed against his temples.
The sound of the explosion had hurt his head because of his sonar skill and his ears were repairing themselves with his regeneration.
Tapping his ears, everyone nodded, realizing they could not hear.
A few heals later, everyone gathered together and the grim look on their faces spoke about the danger of what had just happened.
"If we face one of those in a tunnel, that could bring the whole thing down upon us!"
Batrire nodded as Fowl stuck his finger in his ear again after speaking.
"Either we continue or take four days off, hoping that whatever we face next isn't as bad," Max stated. "I can't see this being any more dangerous than anything else we've faced yet."
***

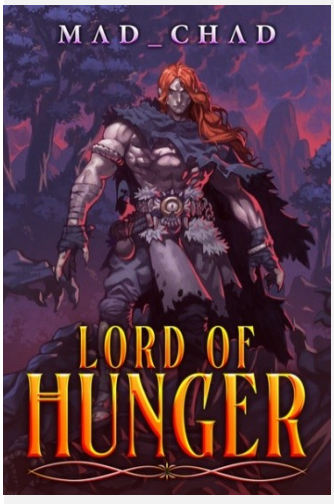
Max's scouting and ability to pull ants allowed them to make it safely through the tunnels without too many issues. They were twenty yards wide, and this time a swirling mushroom pattern grew along the walls. Blue ones ran in a line from one side, up and overhead, until moving back along the walls and ceiling of the tunnels. Occasionally, a pair of exploding ants would be found and Max would lead them and some others into one of the side tunnels. His new fire damage with the help of his elemental, made defeating the ants easy.
The only problem was the amount of times Max had to use Demonic Teleportation to get out from caves that sometimes took place when the ants blew up.
Almost ten hours passed as they made their way steadily further and further down the tunnel system before they came across a massive cavern without a single ant and just the exit portal.
"Seems a bit like a trap," Cordellia said as she glanced around the empty cavern. Other tunnels led inside or out of the two hundred wide area but nothing could be seen.
"I don't see any traps or sense anything," Max stated as he pointed at the exit. "Best thing we can do is make a break for it. If anything happens, I'll grab everyone and run."
As a group, they raced toward the exit, nothing appeared as they reached it. Without fanfare, they stepped into the portal with ease.
***
"Everett, in all my life I have seen nothing like this," the older elf woman muttered. "There have been rumors about stuff like this, but that was a thousand years ago…" Her voice trailed off as the entire party watched the three older members of the Faction inspecting the different robotic parts.
"Alfreda, can we even do anything with any of these parts?"
She shrugged at Tom's question and tapped a few of the gears and parts inside the metallic ant head.
"There are some things that we can melt down and re-use but as Seth pointed out, those crystals which supply power inside differ from any I have ever seen. Even though they appear to be similar to the tower crystals, it's an original power of some kind."
Grunts came from the three before Everett finally left them and moved to where the party was waiting.
"I need to talk to the five of you in my office real quick," he said.
Even though his face appeared to be expressionless, Max could barely make out the tension in the man's jaw.
***
"I need you all to know that our Faction has seen an increase in potential applicants, though I'm certain you're well aware of this already."
Cordellia snorted as she shook her head.
"There have been more people downstairs than I can remember," she replied. "Most of them have googly eyes whenever they see Seth over here."
Everyone chuckled as Max sighed, sinking deeper into the green couch next to Tanila.
"Yes, that is one of the obvious signs. I have also been dealing with some potential networking between other Factions that want to join our current rise to the top," their leader said.
"Some of them were quicker than others, recognizing the power shift after the fight with Dexic and Seth. What this means for us as a whole is you five will be granted a free pass in dungeons if you encounter another group."
"A free pass?"
Nodding at Fowl, Everett pulled out a piece of paper and handed it to the dwarf.
"If you encounter another group, they will allow you to go ahead and have first access to whatever might be available."
"Why would they do that?" Cordellia asked.
"They're afraid of being challenged," Tanila replied before Everett could.

The older man chuckled and nodded.
“Right now we are in a very rare position and I am working hard to keep us safely on top for a very long time,” Everett explained. “Even the Queens are actively involved in some changes that have us in a very *special* position.”
Everyone flinched as he spoke one word differently and used his fingers for air quotes.
“Right now we have gone from a middle of the pack Faction to a place our brothers and sisters haven’t seen in over five hundred years. The council is working with me to ensure that those favors we have not called in are best used, providing the greatest opportunity for growth security. With that said…”
Five different keys appeared, and Everett handed them out slowly.
“You five are now in a room that hasn’t been used for a while. It is basically an apartment on the top floor and is better warded and protected from any potential intrusions.”
A smirk appeared as he said those words, and the old man gave Max a wink.
“No one should be able to enter a window or those doors unless it is Tom, myself or you. When you first use the key, it will bind you to the door and from that moment, each of you will reside there.”
A roll of paper appeared in Everett’s hand, and he spread it out over the table between the couches.
Everyone gathered close and a few whistles came as they recognized what it was.
“You’re going to construct more buildings?”
Grinning, their Faction leader nodded at Cordellia and tapped one of the new additions.
“We are going to construct a new area designed just for crafting. With the current materials we are acquiring, the influx of people looking to join us and the need to keep things safe, we plan to become one of the greatest areas for crafting.”
“This can’t be cheap!” Fowl muttered as he studied the six-floor building that was designed to be built mostly underground. “How much is this going to cost?”
Bags of coins began to fall from Everett’s hand onto the floor, each one clinking with the weight that immediately let the dwarf know they were gold.
“Someone was gracious enough to drain the coffers of not only our recent rival but also the local bookies in town. The two extra fights were highly skewed in our favor and we had a line of individuals all more than content to place wagers in their name for a percentage of the win.”
“Can I ask how much?” Tanila inquired as she leaned forward, grinning in a way Max hadn’t seen in a while.
Wincing, he shook his head from side to side for a moment before nodding.
“Over a hundred thousand gold.”
Coughs came from everyone at the knowledge of how much impact that kind of wealth could bring in the hands of a Faction overnight.
Clearing his throat, Everett then tossed a small leather pouch to everyone but Max.
“Inside is an item from the recent fight that took place. Those are your items, courtesy of Seth. He told me what you most likely needed, and I tried to make the best decision about who got what.”
Gasps and eye bulging came from Fowl, Cordellia, and Batrire as they inspected the jewelry they had been given.
“With that said, all I can say is to be smart and safe. You have the entire council backing you five and there aren’t many requests I will turn down, provided they aren’t impossible or completely ridiculous.”
Batrire elbowed Fowl as he was about to speak, causing him to grunt and close his mouth.
After a moment of silence, Max stood and shook Everett’s hand.
“As always, we appreciate you.”
Chuckling, the older man nodded and moved toward his desk.
“If you five don’t mind, I need to review about fifty applications and prepare to do some duties that fall under my purview.”

Everyone got up and began walking toward the door, grinning as they prepared to check out their new room.
***
“This place is bigger than it should be!” Cordellia exclaimed as they moved about the room.
“Spatial magic,” Tanila said as she nodded. “The walls and rooms are part of a pocket… this thing must be very old and extremely expensive.”
Max realized the two women were right as the door they entered looked no different from the others on the floor except upon opening it, light streamed in from a few skylights above, even though there wasn’t an actual window on top of this floor. Couches and cushioned chairs were some of the many ornate decorations that awaited in the first room and down a few different halls and areas were sleeping quarters, a cooking area and multiple private bathrooms.
“How do we decide who sleeps where?” Fowl asked as he came from one bedroom down a hall.
“Just pick one,” Max said as he let out a gentle moan, finding the chair he had just sat down in was softer than anything he had ever reclined in before.
“Oh, that’s easy then. I’ll take the one with the lowest bed so I don’t have to toss Batrire into it each night.”
Laughter came as Batrire chased Fowl around the room, the pair dodging tables with flowers and other furniture obviously not meant to be part of a brawl.
I could get used to something like this…

39 Chapter 257 - Pissing Off The Tower https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-5-stubs-1030/chapter/1849738/chapter-257-pissing-off-the-tower 2024-10-17

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES



Lord of Hunger [Dark Fantasy LitRPG]

You are what you eat.

Redmane's Skill is unique — as long as he can get his jaws around something, he can eat it.

Centuries of imprisonment haven't dulled his appetite for revenge, and when his jailers feed him something they shouldn't — Divine Flesh, served cold — he shatters the chains that bind him.

Redmane emerges into a dangerous and unfamiliar world, where figures appear from his forgotten past. Some offer aid, some stand in his way, all feed an ever-growing question.

Who is the Lord of Hunger?

Daily Releases - 12PM CST

Fast Progression

Strong to OMPC

Long story - Massive world

10 Chapters dropping on release day

30+ Chapters on Patreon (Book 1 Complete)

Chapter 257 - Pissing Off The Tower

“That is about the ugliest thing I have ever seen,” Batrire stated as they stared at a pair of monsters about a hundred yards away.

They looked like someone had taken clay or flesh and partially melted it into a twelve foot blob of a person. Two large black eyes and something that resembled a mouth decorated the head, while a wide, fat torso was supported by a pair of stubby legs. Two arms that almost reached what would be its knees lay against the blob’s side.

“Those are flesh golems,” Tanila said, her voice carrying a hint of displeasure. “Nasty and horrible things that are supposedly summoned by using the body parts of people who are sacrificed in their creation.”

Max’s mind recalled two pages in a book he had read about golems like these.

“If you’re right, then these are highly resistant to damage, strong against magic and, like everything else, hurt when they hit you.”

“So, what’s the game plan? We each tank one and focus on yours first?”

Nodding at Fowl’s question, Max summoned his weapon and pointed to the one on the right.

“I’ll try and stealth attack it. The good news is these tunnels aren’t that wide and if need be we can summon walls to block them in.”

“Provided they don’t just bash them down,” added the dwarf.

“Go ahead and toss your stone, little warrior boy.”

Giving Max the finger, Fowl pulled a stone out and tossed it at the one on the left, moving forward and preparing to engage.

Entering Stealth, Max moved to the right a little more, grateful for the fifteen yard wide tunnel system they were in.

As the pair ran towards Fowl, their steps echoed down into the darkness, only masked when they had roared at first.

Fowl held his shield at the ready, prepared to take the first strike as Max swung from behind at his target.
The blade cut deep into the leg of his enemy, slicing through the flesh until it slammed into something halfway through, stopping his momentum completely.
Without having to turn around, the creature's face appeared on the side he had attacked from and both arms moved toward Max, who had to yank his weapon free.
It took every bit of strength and all of his speed to avoid both attacks that came.
“Careful your weapon will–”
“Goblin shite!” Fowl cursed, and Max could sense his dwarven friend's hammer stuck inside the leg of the golem he was fighting.
The sound of the golem's fist hitting the dwarf’s shield as the squishy end splattered around it was a muffled thud, almost like a wet towel slapped against something hard. Yet there was a squelch that came as the moist material spread and clung to the shield, keeping Fowl from moving it as he hoped.
Casting Fire Nova, Max sensed the ice spear coming toward the one he was facing, seeing its impact against the creature’s side.
Cold ice formed for a moment on the flesh as the impact shifted it, maybe a foot, the spell traveling through the creature and mitigating most of the force.
His spell went off as he dodged another attack, slicing at the arm that came toward him, hitting what had to be the bones or whatever inside. Once again his blade came to an immediate halt.
Waves of fire rolled off from him, the air filled with the scent of burnt flesh.
Flames covered the golem Max faced, a guttural growl coming from its mouth as both arms came at him once more.
Dodging and weaving, hacking and slashing, Max cast a fireball, watching more flesh burn, seeing the creature lose a little of its massive size as the outer layer was slowly burnt away.
“Fire!”
Tanila quickly shifted to fire spells as Max tried to cut off chunks of the golem instead of trying to cut through it.
Soon the worked stone floor of the hallway they were in was littered with clumps of burning flesh, and the golem now before Max was no longer thick but instead a metallic skeleton, black eyes and a weird wide mouth head, swinging much faster at him as its size grew smaller.
The fire spells did little more than continue to burn off flesh, Max’s weapon's hammer side was a much better tool for attacking the bones inside the flesh.
[Power Strike]
His attack struck the hip of the golem where the joint came together and a cracking sound filled the hallway as the metal shattered, causing the creature to fall sideways.
How strong are these things? Even one attack like that doesn’t do much!
Lost in that thought, Max hammered over and over the golem's metal head, doing his best to hit the same spot over and over.
Small dents began to appear and when a plate on its skull shifted and a tiny opening formed, he drove the tip of his spear into it, feeling the creature jerk as the dark stones became darker.
Turning, Max moved toward Fowl when the pressure from behind him came.
An explosion rocked the hallway, chunks of metal flying everywhere.
Four large pieces pierced his back as he dodged and evaded the others, his shield having been summoned as he twisted.
He tossed an air wall up before Tanila and the others, unsure how far those pieces might travel, taking the damage he knew wouldn’t kill him.
[Regeneration]
Quickly, his body began to push the pieces that had pierced him out, and ignoring the pain, Max grunted in frustration.
Fowl was about three-fourths health, the constant attacks that hammered down on him combined with the way the golem could almost immobilize the shield by its flesh sticking to it, meant his dwarven friend couldn’t dodge or block every attack.

“Fowl! Go two shields! Tanila, be ready to air wall!”
Dancing around the globs of flesh that had fallen from Fowl’s target, apparently his Thorn skill able to damage even this thing, Max summoned a stone wall and moved up it.
[Magical Strike]
Slicing downward at the creature's head, Max’s blade cut through the metal skull, the armor of it no longer protected by whatever it had been.
The creature shuddered and two seconds later, as Max hid behind his shield, it exploded as the other one had, this time with more force.
Flying through the air, Max set his feet and absorbed the impact against the wall of the tunnel, seeing that Fowl had not been moved and appeared only slightly damaged from being next to the creature when it exploded.
“Okay, someone tell me what the heck are these things?” Fowl muttered as he used hand and started swiping flesh chunks off his shield.
“Resistant to physical attacks and magical attacks,” Tanila said as they moved to where the dwarf was standing. “This is going to be a slow and painful grind.”
“Especially with my cooldown on that one skill. Power strike might do something if I clear off some of the flesh on the head before trying to smash it but even that’s no guarantee.”
“Should we try to kill a pair without the use of skills?” Cordellia asked.
Tsking his tongue for a moment, Max saw the expression on Tanila’s face and nodded.
“Might as well.”
***
The fight against the next two took over fifteen minutes as Max and Tanila burnt away the flesh, allowing him to break a hip socket again and eventually repeat the process once more.
Fowl’s target was killed in the same time and fashion, wearing it down and disabling it before creating a weak point and piercing its skull.
“It’s doable,” Max said as he watched a piece of metal that had struck his foot be pushed out by his Regeneration skill. “Just slow. At least the experience is good, right?”
A few nods came, and they set off further down the tunnel, not looking forward to the speed at which this tower floor was going to test them.
***
“Four days in a tower floor. It almost makes me feel good to know not even you all can blaze through every level.”
The smile on Tom’s face was almost enough to lighten the mood the five felt as they ate in the Faction dining hall.
“How many have joined?” Fowl asked as he pointed at the four groups no one recognized.
“We’ve had eight commit in the last three days. There are another five that may meet our testing,” their trainer replied as he pointed at a table. “That group is the one Everett had talked about possibly trying the fiftieth dungeon. They are strong compared to most of the others.”
Everyone spent a little extra time studying the party.
It appeared a pair of human women were the warriors while another woman was their healer. A pair of elves rounded out their party, one being a mage and the other being an archer.
“Five women in one party? That sounds awful,” Tanila muttered.
Batrire and Cordellia both grunted and nodded.
Max, Fowl, and Tom all cocked their heads and squinted at the three women.
“Why would that be a bad thing?” Fowl asked.
“Because if you ever piss off a woman bad enough, she might let you die,” Batrire replied with a scowl.
Tanila and Cordellia both laughed and bobbed their heads.

“You do not know how bad things can be until you upset every woman in your party…” their mage said and then paused, frowning at Fowl. “Or perhaps some of you do.”
Waving his hands in surrender, their dwarf warrior shook his head.
“I only try to upset one of you at a time. I’m not that dumb.”
Each of the women smirked and grinned, all chuckling at some joke Fowl was obviously missing.
“So now what?” Tom asked as he tapped the table to change the conversation. “I’d say we got our people researching possible bosses, but again, nothing matches up with what you’ve faced before. Golems come up occasionally, but as always, what you described isn’t till much later in the tower. Closer to the mid forties.”
That knowledge answered some of the questions Max had been going over in his head about the aspect of the golem. His Weapon Mastery skill was still rare and part of what made him feel what they were facing was higher was how he couldn’t do as much damage to it. Finding something with an epic ability to consume was on his list, but that was all left in the tower’s hands.
It was a shame none of those elves had an epic weapon skill .
You have been silent for almost a week. What has changed?
No power from what you fight. We need to fight something soon that will help us grow stronger. I have been considering if the tower has specifically chosen to hurt you with its choices. Not giving you what you need to get stronger.
Can it do that? I mean… is it alive or aware enough for that?
It is sentient and yet…
A sensation of something troubling came through the connection with his skill.
The system is controlled and directed by a select group of beings. They can sway or change certain things within the system. Perhaps…
Max heard a cough and turned to see everyone was looking at him.
“Sorry, just lost in my head, working out some ideas and things,” Max said as he stood up from his seat. “Actually, I want to check a few notes in my room if you don’t mind.”
Tom nodded, not hiding the frown as he watched Max quickly depart.
***
What is it you are thinking?
You created a new skill. Not a new skill in the system, but a skill not designed for this world. Doing so could have gained attention from those beings, and they might have shifted things against you because of it.
Because I made a weapon that shouldn’t be in our world?
Yes… Do me a favor. Write your elf a note and go lay down. I do not have the power to do this outside of your dreams.
With that, Max felt the presence of his skill vanish and let out a groan.
Putting the note on the door, he laid down in bed, closing his eyes and found sleep came as quickly as he hoped.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Soo... on my Patreon - Book 5 Ended last week and will start next week there. (Oct 21st)

Friday, October 25th - 4 chapters drop!

Saturday, October 26th - the last 3 chapters drops and book 5 ends on Royal Road!

I know it stinks but I have to take it down 10/30 in the morning due to amazon launch on 11/1.

40 Chapter 258 – Revelations

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-5-stubs-1030/chapter/1851431/chapter-258-revelations 2024-10-17

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Scorching Ascension - [Litrpg apocalypse]

A system apocalypse where everyone must choose a wand instead of a class, and where survival depends on mastering them.

Ethan Voss had been restocking soup cans when the system found his world. Its first order of business? Forcing everyone to select a class of wands, and then subjecting them to a process reserved for mana-less worlds: The Integration Tutorials.

Armed with shapeshifting and customizable wands, the participants are put through an unforgiving trial where the way to survive is to grow stronger. Fast. Only thing is, monsters aren't the only ones that can drop wand fragments.

For Ethan, this was perfect. This new world would be his chance to forge himself a new life outside of the shadow of his tragic past. He just needed a chance and this might just be it. He will claw himself to the top, no matter the cost.

Chapter 258 – Revelations

He was in a room, similar to the one in their new apartment except the light that was there came from everywhere. A soft glow of yellow and up above where the skylight usually showed the time of day, nothing came.
In the plush chair he often sat was the clone of himself, frowning as those red eyes stared at him.
Sit. We need to talk.
Rather than arguing, Max moved to the couch near his skill and sat.

Since that fight in the arena and the power I have gained, I can recall much more. Five immensely powerful and yet limited beings are responsible for every life, planet and *god* in the entirety of our existence. All power flows through them and is directed based on some set rules and principals. To act outside those is almost impossible, but there have been moments that, while I cannot recall specifics, they have broken them.
Beyond them are other beings, powerful and yet once again limited by rules and pacts, forced to operate within them lest those they have forged those agreements with can act against them as a group.
An image of the golden dragon they had encountered appeared above his doppelganger's hand.
This is one of those beings. The power contained within that single drop of blood I attempted to acquire was beyond your imagination. He was faster than I thought and prevented me from collecting it before we were pinned beneath his claw.
What would that blood have done for us?
His skill laughed and as always it came from all around the room.
Possible ways to transform it into a potion or other ingredient. Even better would have been summoning a demon with that single drop. What would have come would have been powerful enough to destroy everything in a single moment.
Max shuddered at that thought, wondering what kind of demon that would be.
So I have broken some rule by creating a skill that shouldn't be here? Even though the tower gave me the skills and items required for just that?
A frown appeared as his skill nodded.
I honestly believe multiple gods are taking notice of you. Even if they are not aware of who you are specifically or where you exist, they can influence the system by giving power they own to those five. Think of it like a boon. They can give you something, but it is very difficult to do the opposite within the confines of the system.
Are you saying you remember more? Last time we talked–
I was weak.
His skill interrupted him, leaning forward and grinned.
Those three elves served more than one purpose and the power they granted differs from the monsters which inhabit the tower and the dungeons.
Two fingers rose as his doppelganger held up its hand.
Two different kinds of power exist here and the ones that come from a tower climber are on a different level. Killing a normal person who has yet to gain the experience of the tower provides a lot more power than a dungeon monster.
When you compare the power I gain from a monster in the tower, they are like drops from a slow drip. In time they add up, but it takes forever. A tower climber is like grabbing a bucket or a barrel and dumping it into my reservoir. Some are even more than a single barrel. That last fight was the sweetest of the three.
Which is why you were always so adamant about killing and consuming others when I first got you and we talked.
Laughing, his image nodded and leaned back into the chair, grinning in a mischievous way.
And yet you resisted that urge. The power to be gained that way is intoxicating because the growth is so much faster. Even when you cannot gain stats, the life force those people contain are so much sweeter and filling.
Max shuddered at the thought of eating people and their souls, but said nothing, grateful for one of these rare moments his skill actually shared useful information.
So now what? Will the tower continue to punish us?

No… eventually it will revert to its old self. The power it must be using to create things outside of this world's domain is not limitless. The news that the older Elven woman in your Faction and your friends share about some items being in your world means it has done so in the past. Again, based on how much came out, those were one offs. Time will come when the tower goes back to what is known. Maybe it is trying to trick you, maybe it is trying to limit your growth, but eventually we will consume it regardless.
Rubbing his face, Max closed his eyes, trying to consider everything he was hearing.
Should I hold off on making new items? From trying some of the other things I had considered making?
A frown appeared, and the clone nodded.
For now, that might be wise. Only make what your world has the potential for.
One last question before you rush off, as you always do. Was standing up to the Queens the right decision? Are you certain we did not act too quickly?
The room erupted with a cacophony of laughter as different tones, voices and sounds burst forth, all while his image grinned.
No, it was time. For a while, none will consider moving against you. The show we put on has everyone scared. None know if you truly tried or if you were at your limits, yet when that elf used the staff she did and you pushed through it, surviving something that would have killed almost every other person there, each of them immediately knew facing you head on is a mistake.
Three fingers were held up as his skill continued talking.
They learned they cannot fight you face to face. To do so puts them at significant risk and the rumors of what you have already defeated make many fearful of what you might be.
What I might be?
Some might consider you an avatar, a god infused being. For one to be so weak and now so strong it might explain everything. Occasionally, gods impart that, but the cost is great. Most won't think you possess me. That itself would be even worse as the more who die to us, the stronger we get.
Tapping his second finger, the grin grew.
Both Queens heard that you only care about your family and friends. No one wants to upset you and that means instead they want to befriend you. Those two women were more scared than you could tell. Had you tried, both would be dead and they knew it. Their power doesn't come from the physical side. Even while both of them are strong and they command those around them with it, you could have slaughtered everyone in that room in a moment, killing them easily.
His clone sighed and frowned for a second.
Part of me desired that. That they would force that choice, that one would give in and attack. That would have been enough, I'm certain, to allow me to evolve again. To grow as I need to.
Regardless, the last thing any of them want to do is attempt to attack from stealth. The knowledge you have survived multiple assassination attempts, did not succumb to poison and have potentially defeated other enemies none have been made aware of, makes them leary to try that as well. Which means we have time to reach the level we must and truly rise to the power that is only possible in the tower.
Nodding, Max let out a sigh.
His clone held out its hand toward Max.
Cocking his eyebrow, Max looked at the outstretched hand.
Why?
Grinning, his skill snorted.
You have kept your part of our bargain. For that, I continue to honor mine. When the moment comes and you truly need me, I will be there.

Nodding, Max reached out and grasped the hand, a weird connecting coming between the two of them as they shook.
Now wake up. The time to get stronger is now.
***
Max yawned and saw that Tanila was next to him, still asleep. Her red hair was going in a hundred directions as it lay across her bare shoulders and back, contrasting with her white skin.
Moving overly quietly, he scooted closer, brushing some of the hair to the side and began to kiss the back of her neck.
“You better not tell me it's time to get out of bed or I’ll murder you in your sleep next time,” Tanila groaned as she rolled over, smiling at him.
“Oh, I will not allow you to get out of bed for at least an hour.”
***
The clang of metal striking metal rang out sharply, an ear piercing clash that sounded like a loud metal bell being struck.
“On your left!”
Tanila’s shout allowed Fowl to shift his position, moving to block the charging wolf that came towards their healer, slamming into it.
The flat portion of Max’s weapon crushed the wolf he faced, its metallic spine snapping under the blow.
“Four more!”
Cordellia sent another lightning arrow at the mechanical spider that was attempting to drop from the tree above, making it spasm, dangling on the metal wire it used to descend, halting its approach.
Max cursed, casting another Lightning ball spell and sending it toward the pack of four wolves surrounding Fowl.
Their metal jaws and the jagged teeth drew blood when they bit on the joints of the warrior, sliding between the weakened spots on the dwarf’s legs.
“Taunt is still down!”
Almost thirty metallic corpses of different animals were not moving in the forest area they fought.
Tanila summoned a cloud of lighting again, exhaustion once more appearing as she didn’t hold back.
Bolts of lighting moved like possessed weapons, arching toward the metal animals, igniting the little bit of flesh and fur that was between their mainly robotic sections of their bodies.
Chaos was everywhere as the three stood on an air wall, twenty feet off the floor of the forest, their archer taking out the spiders descending from the trees over two hundred feet tall while their warriors handled the army below.
***
[Regeneration expired]
Panting, Max moved his shoulder, grateful for the relief that came.
“Those gorillas hit way harder than the others ever did,” Fowl muttered. “And those tigers… what god comes up with a robotic tiger?”
Bobbing his head, Max glanced around them, almost sixty different contraptions or weird unions of flesh and machine scattered around them in clumps.
“I didn’t realize that many would come,” Cordellia said, her eyes downcast at the ground.
“It’s not your fault,” Tanila said, giving her shoulder a gentle squeeze. “No one knew that would happen.”
“Still, had I shot the one Seth said, it wouldn’t have called for help.”
“We survived, everyone did their part, and best of all, we learned a lesson,” Max added as he smiled at their ranger. “I’ve brought way more monsters to my party before. Just remember those gorillas can roar like that and now we know it doesn't just bring one's like it.”
Fowl was silent as he continued picking up different animals and storing them in his space.

“The first few packs weren’t this bad,” Batrire muttered. “Just how many more animals are we going to face like this?”
“No one but the gods know,” Tanila replied as she gave Cordellia one last gentle touch, moving to join Max and Fowl as they collected items. “What bothers me more than anything is just the idea of creating a creature like this. Those eyes don’t show any kind of life. Just two gems that seem bent on nothing but destruction.”
Batrire shuddered as she stared at one of the dead gorilla’s, its red eyes now dim no longer blazing like rubies after its chest had been smashed in by Max.
“The only thing that scares me more is finding humans, elves or dwarves turned into those.”
Tanila froze mid stride, turning to face her dwarven friend, eyes widening as she looked at her.
“You just committed a Fowl!”
Grimacing, their healer nodded slowly.
“Dear Ockrim, forgive me for that,” she prayed outloud.

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A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Check out Through the Portal!

Connor McKinnley was an airline pilot. Turns out he was a master tactician in his past life, on another world. Now, he's found a way back into that world and must defend it. Time is running out. Connor must rally his allies, outwit his foes, and defend a realm he barely remembers. The fate of this world depends on whether he can once again become the leader and strategist he was meant to be—or whether his forgotten enemies will tear it apart for good.

A strategy based LitRPG inspired by Fire Emblem, with elves, knights, barbarian babes and evil wizards.

Chapter 259 - An Average Day In The Tower

Three days of slogging through a forest over forty miles long had earned a great amount of experience and orange gems, yet everyone was tired, frustrated by the constant fighting.

At least twice a day, a fight took place with over fifty of the mechanical animals and each time it was only each member of their team acting off instinct and experience that prevented casualties from taking place.

Back in the Faction house, only Alfreda was there to collect the collection of corpses they had stored.

“You five can’t help but make me wonder what in the gods is going to show up next, can you?” she asked as her gloved hand inspected one of the half wolf, half robot creatures. “It’s like each day is something out of a nightmare.”

“You’re welcome to take my place and fight,” Fowl said with a sigh. “If I didn’t have all of this in my storage, I would have gone right to bed.”

She nodded, seeing a pile of about eighty different animals taking up a large amount of the room.

“You five can go. Everett told me to apologize for not getting to be here. Faction duties and all,” she declared with a grin. “Even Tom is stuck, as I’m sure you saw on the training grounds, testing new recruits and helping prepare them for this new life.”

Max nodded and grinned, having commented on the group of about twenty that were out there when they arrived.

“If you are okay with us just letting you sign what we dropped off on your own, we’ll head upstairs,” Max said, giving her a slip with everything he had cataloged.

Grinning, she nodded and took the paper, storing it and turning back to the treasure trove of materials waiting to be dealt with.

***

Each of them sat on the couches and chairs in the center of the room, trying to stay awake a little longer after having eaten in the dining area.

“Do you think it’s weird we haven’t seen a boss or any orange gems?” Batrire asked as she rubbed Fowl’s hairy scalp. “Usually we see something worthy of good loot by now.”

Cordellia grunted, even with her eyes closed and grinned.

“You sound like your man now,” she teased.

“She’s right, though,” Max said as he chewed on his lip. “Everything before this boss seems different. The tower appears to be doing something different.”

Eyes snapped toward him as the three women studied his expression.

Max couldn’t help that he was frowning as he shared that knowledge.

“How do you know that?” Batrire asked, glaring at him.

Sighing he tapped his head, having been tired and revealed more than he should have.

“Think about it. Nothing about the last four floors has been normal. None of the monsters or animals we fought are like what others have. Part of me even wonders if someone can even enter the same tower floor we are on.”

Each of their eyes widened as the three glanced at each other before back at Max who nodded slowly.

“Think about it. In all our tower climbing, we’ve encountered only two groups. One was random, and the other took a Faction who was actively looking for us. What if we’re the only ones who could be on these floors?”

Cordellia was on her feet, suddenly unable to stay seated it appeared as she paced back and forth a few steps.

“You alright dear?” their healer asked as she studied the elf.

“No… if he’s right… I mean I’ve always known… but.” Cordellia paused and turned to Max who had softened his face knowing what was coming.
“Floor fifty one and I tell you everything. I promise.”
Grunting, the woman shook her head and moved back to her chair, flopping down on it.
“I’d swear sometimes you must have a mind reading skill,” she grumbled.
“Gods no,” Tanila said with a grin. “I’d be in a lot of trouble if he did.”
***
Max held up his hand, moving ahead and finding the section of stones that were trapped in the hallway they were moving along.
“It’s been four miles and not a single monster,” Fowl grunted. “Yet this has to be the hundredth trap you have found.”
Nodding, Max moved to where the lever activated in the wall and held up his hand. “Back up. I’m going to activate this next section.”
Everyone obeyed his orders, moving about thirty yards away, having found out not long after they entered this maze that some stuff was more dangerous than others.
Summoning his giant boulder, Max continued to pour mana into it until it was about eight wide. Setting it on the stone, he pushed it, watching it roll over the sections that were trapped.
Two different areas on the wall opened up, one at ankle level and the other at shoulder height.
A wave of lightning raced across the section, tearing through the boulder and shearing off stone while the top half was a blade of wind, gouging out a three-foot chunk before failing to pierce further.
The stone spun and continued to roll down the hallway, banging into the walls and running over other sections, causing an area of gas to appear further ahead and finally rolled into an area where the floor gave away, falling from view.
Jogging to where everyone was waiting, Max pointed at the section he had just cleared.
“Maybe we should let Fowl lead instead.”
A finger and grunt came from their dwarven warrior, and Max grinned as he motioned to follow once more.
Max heard Cordellia and Batrire talking as he stayed about twenty yards ahead of each other.
“ *Trap floors are extremely rare until the forties* ,” Cordellia said. “ *Even then, most leave immediately because unless someone has a rogue or ranger with that skill, it’s suicide to venture deeper.* ”
“ *Which is why we’re grateful Seth has a plethora of talents.* ”
Smiling to himself, Max was grateful for the idiot that tried to kill him. The skill was finally paying off after having been completely useless for so long.
***
“Okay, no one is going to like this part, but you need to trust me.”
Everyone grimaced as they stood at the doorway to the room that was filled with a yellow liquid that gave off a horrible smell and burnt their noses.
“I’m going to collect a few samples real quick for Alfreda and then we’re going to run across the room on the side of the walls–”
“And you think those columns aren’t going to be an issue?” Fowl asked, interrupting Max.
Pointing at the large room, Max shook his head.
Scattered across the room were stone platforms, but Max already sensed that one of the two closest to the start was trapped, a red haze appearing over it.
Whatever the pattern was for someone to not fall in would require him going first.
The jump was only about eight feet between each platform.
The problem was that the roof was about fifteen feet above the liquid and Max had no doubts it wouldn’t feel good if one fell in.
Memories of being eaten alive by acid had appeared for a moment before he pushed it away.

Five-foot columns ran along the wall, creating an outcropping every five yards that would make traveling harder versus running along a flat surface.
“There are a hundred yards to cover. With the harness Tom made me, we should be fine.”
Grunting, Fowl scowled and shook his head.
“Fine, says the guy who can't fall off the wall…”
“Don’t worry, if I drop you, I’ll try to grab you before whatever that is melts off your beard.”
Max bent down and lowered the glass vial into the liquid, his nose twitching at the smell that smashed into it. It was so acidic it made his eyes immediately start to water being that close.
After two small vials were collected and stored, Max pulled out his harness, which everyone groaned at and began tightening them in.
On each shoulder were straps that kept Batrire and Cordellia snug against his shoulders while the back strap put Tanila against his back, slightly higher than usual and facing away. Fowl was in a looser strap that allowed Max to not bump legs while using his arms and strength to keep the dwarf in position ahead of him.
“I’ll never forget how Tom laughed when he saw us in this,” Max said before moving to the side. “Hold on now, this is going to be fun.”
[Spider Walk]
Not needing to race, Max started moving around the room, walking along the walls, trying not to laugh as everyone grunted and tried to not complain too much.
He didn’t struggle with walking sideways, but each of them felt the weight pulling them toward the yellow liquid below.
Carefully stepping so that his feet stuck to the column, Max moved around them, crossing the room with more ease than he thought it might go. His air wall had been ready the entire time, just in case something had happened.
“See, that wasn’t so bad,” Max said as he stepped onto the hallway floor across the room.
***
“As always, you five impress me,” Tom said with a sigh. “Already reaching another boss floor while I’m here working with all these new adventurers.”
Tanila motioned to the group of recruits, who looked completely exhausted, and grinned.
“I think I can tell which ones worked with you today,” she stated. “There were days I felt like you drained every ounce of mana from me.”
“That’s my job. Finding ways to push people past the walls they box themselves in. Tell me, have you been practicing like we talked about?”
Wincing, she shook her head, ignoring Fowl's chuckle. “I’d like to say I’ve been too busy climbing a tower, but I doubt you’ll accept that answer.”
Tom shook his head and pointed a thumb at the group they had been discussing.
“The stronger you get, the more power you’ll gain. And with that power comes a responsibility to use it correctly. You have already proved to me you’re a fast learner. Occasionally, when a fight gives you a chance, try to do something that seems impossible. Maybe you focus on a body part to target instead of the main mass. Try to hit a moving target with a spell that typically requires them to be still. Learn to lead or predict where the monster is going to be. In later tower floors, being able to hit some targets on the run will be the difference between one opponent and a dozen more.”
Cordellia choked on the bite she was taking as Tom spoke, and no one said anything when he looked at her.
“I saw the stone being delivered,” Max said, changing the topic. “Lines are already marked for the area. When do you expect to start digging out the dirt?”
Grimacing, Tom shook his head.
“We’re waiting on a team to arrive and I hope it’s soon. In less than a month, the rain should start and then things are going to get muddy out there. If they don’t have that lower floor dug out and the support walls in place, we are going to be in trouble.”

“Just need the walls and roof,” Fowl said. “Once those are in place, you can work through the rest of the bad weather. Besides, we both know you’re going to have enchanted stonework which will keep that place dry and the temperature perfect. The real problem is going to be handling the hauling off of all that material you dig up. Based on the size of the plans and the marks on the ground, you’ll need a few thousand carts of dirt hauled off.”
Everyone turned and stared at their dwarf, watching him roll his eyes before groaning.
“No, I haven't put any points into intelligence… I’ve just been around enough construction areas to know what it takes.”
Max grinned as everyone let the stress of today's tower floor leave them, knowing that whatever tomorrow held, it wasn’t going to be fun.
Of that, he was absolutely certain.

42 Chapter 260 - A Monstrosity of Sorts

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Chapter 260 - A Monstrosity of Sorts

Max cursed as he slid down a metal incline the moment he stepped through the portal.
Unable to stop the descent without summoning walls, he saved them, unsure at first how far this smooth tunnel that was narrowing was going to continue.
A shout from behind announced Fowl had just entered as the curse echoed off the metallic walls.
“ELLLLLLFFFFF TIIIIITTSSSS!”
Shrieks came next as he continued his descent down the metallic tube that was about eight feet wide, slowly angling up and slowing his plummet through the darkness.
Light appeared from ahead and when the tube leveled out, Max could see there was an opening about thirty yards from where he had finished his slide.
“Look out!”
Fowl’s shout came as the dwarf slid face first down the tube, his plate armor scraping along the metal, leaving a trail of sparks.
The other three came quickly, cursing and complaining.
“Everyone okay?” Max asked as the group ended up in a pile.
Some grunts and murmurs of acknowledgement were heard from each as he lifted them and set them on their feet.
“What in the gods' arse is that for an entrance?” Fowl muttered as he glanced at the opening ahead and back up the way they had come.
“Nothing good,” Max stated. “Getting back up there would mean we need to wait for my boot's ability to refresh. Otherwise, I doubt we could climb up that.”
“Which means we’re stuck facing the boss,” Cordellia said as she pulled out her bow.
The entire party acknowledged that truth as each of them focused on the opening behind Max.
“I’ll scout while everyone else gets ready.”
As Max stealthed and moved toward the entrance, Batrire cast her buff as Fowl rotated his shoulders.
Outside of the entrance, what Max could see opened up and before him was an enclosed, metallic colosseum. A huge fifty-foot wall off patch worked metal plates created a wall, with a lattice of welded and meshed metal parts that created a dome over the two hundred yard wide metal floor.

Every row that was outside of the area they would fight in was empty, and Max wasn't sure if he was happy about that, especially after spotting the creature they would face.
Like a hodgepodge version of multiple monsters, a metallic and flesh monster sat on all four legs. Rising over twenty-five feet tall, the creature had metal and flesh-like front legs like a tiger with a pair of massive back haunches that looked like a bear. A wolf's head, with metal teeth inside its robotic jaw, opened and closed every few seconds as its red eyes stared at the tunnel they were in.
A third of the head was covered in sick, green looking hair, part of the patch covering one eye while the rest of the head was mostly metal with the occasional exposed area of flesh. Different colors of fur and type of flesh covered the rest of its body as purple and black goo occasionally dripped from random areas of it. Each pile on the metal floor hissed, a small cloud of smoke appearing a moment as it made contact with the ground.
On its back was a weird box contraption that seemed out of place on the creature's body.
"Is that a goblin's head?"
Cordellia's question came from inside the tunnel and Max moved back inside, glad she had stayed back a way from the entrance.
"Yes," he replied as he appeared next to her. "Two heads actually on that box like thing. Whatever this is, it's going to be nasty."
"What are we going to do against it?"
Fowl's question had no easy answer as the five of them stood there, slinking in the shadows as they considered the monster before them.
"You have two of your special arrows?"
Cordellia nodded at Max, tapping the spot they were resting inside of her quiver.
"You focus all of your shouts on its eyes. Try to make sure at least one of them hits with an empowered shot. I'd go ahead and enchant the arrow with fire as well. Tanila and I will use fire as it seemed to have hurt the other things we fought the most. Fowl will need to be ready to taunt and use his skills."
Turning to their healer, Max grimaced.
"Until this thing actually hits Fowl, you'll have no idea how much damage it does but what really scares me is the stuff on its back. You'll have to be ready for anything, even the use of your shield."
Batrire nodded, biting her bearded lip slightly.
"No matter what happens, I'll keep you all going."
Nodding, Max turned toward the boss and frowned.
"I'm going to stealth and try to hit its head from the start. We ready?"
Grunts came and Max summoned his fire familiar, the light of his and Tanila's casting shadows of them against the tube.
"Let's go then."
Fowl raced out of where they had been, shield and weapon ready as he charged.
After he was twenty yards from the entrance, the rest of the party moved out, the three staying close enough to Batrire that if her shield was needed, they would be safe.
Max ran right behind Fowl, invisible as he watched the boss rise up on its back haunches before slamming into the ground. Right before it did, both of the front claws crackled with electricity upon hitting the floor that arched across the entire area.
Stealth failed as the spell jolted him and the others.
Each person suffered some damage, though it appeared less reached where Tanila and the other two were.
Fowl's stride faltered for a moment as the lighting arced off his plate armor.
The boss then lowered its head, the large box like contraption on its back opening at the top.
"What the–"

Fowl stopped talking as a barrel both he and Max recognized was ejected from the top, coming toward the spot where Fowl was.
Without asking, Max stored his weapon and grabbed his friend, bolting off to the side and escaping the barrel that impacted against the ground, flames spreading out immediately.
The boss turned, following Max and Fowl as he darted a bit away, another barrel coming from the box.
“How do we get close and not face those?” Fowl shouted as Max zigged and zagged, trying to draw the aim of its attacks away from the other three while also not allowing them to be boxed in.
“I don’t know!” Max yelled back as he evaded the fifth barrel, glancing back and seeing how much of the enclosed space was already getting covered with fire. “I need to get closer! Give me a second!”
Dashing in the direction of the boss, Max waited, his mind counting the time between each of the attacks.
Like clockwork, the sixth shot came, three seconds after the fifth one.
Summoning an air wall right above the open spot, the barrel collided, igniting and dropping the flames on top of the boss, spilling into the open section of the box.
Less than a second after the fire entered the weird structure, it exploded, flames igniting and covering the boss and twenty yards past it.
Roars and howls of pain came from the beast as it danced around inside the area before running out of it, slamming into one of the metal walls and sending flames and flesh everywhere.
“Goblin shite! That was amazing!” their warrior exclaimed.
Max ran back toward where the others were, avoiding the middle section of the floor where flames covered over fifty yards.
“Now what?” Tanila shouted as they drew close and he dropped Fowl.
“I have no idea! We can’t get close while it burns and it appears to be in a lot of pain.”
For ten seconds the boss ran along the wall towards the opposite end.
As it drew close an opening appeared and huge nozzles came out, shooting a foam that covered the flaming beast, immediately extinguishing the flames.
“That’s cheating!” Fowl exclaimed as the fire was snuffed out.
The stench of chemicals and burnt flesh and hair was overpowering, and Max watched as the boss stayed near the opening.
“It’s healing! Look!”
Robotic arms came from inside the hole, some running tubes into the boss while others carried a new object.
Unable to get the party safely across the floor due to the flames, Max ran across on his own, summoning a fireball as he moved.
Black and purple goo were dripping from the boss as four hoses that had been thrust into its back sent liquid inside the beast. Its burnt flesh was beginning to regrow and its red eyes were pulsing.
A backpack-like item made of metal was being strapped onto the creature, and not wanting to wait, Max unleashed his fireball as he got close, sending it into the opening.
Another pair of robotic arms reacted to the attack, racing out of the opening in the wall to try and block his spell.
Without missing a beat, Max pulled a barrel out of his storage, tossing it with all his strength at the opening, right behind the spell this dungeon floor was attempting to stop.
The boss roared, ripping itself free from the hoses and racing from the spot it was at, the backpack it had been getting screwed into its back only partially secured.
The flames washed over those arms appeared to have some sort of shield, but the cask connected, sending a wave of flames that went past the arms and into the opening.

Another loud explosion came as the liquid fire made it inside the hole in the wall, setting off a chain reaction of some kind within it, popping out sheets of metal for about forty yards in each direction.
The boss came toward Max who took off running back toward his allies, dodging the still burning puddles of flames.
“Fowl!”
His dwarf friend came toward him, dashing across the floor.
As he moved, Max sensed five objects racing toward him and summoned an earth wall, dodging to the right.
The sound of the wall being destroyed and metal upon metal came as Max’s Sonar revealed that five harpoons had come from the metal backpack bouncing up and down as the boss ran. Each had a metal wire connected and was now being retracted toward the top of the boss.
Cursing at the new item that was going to make this whole fight worse, Max waited till he passed Fowl, turning immediately, and charged at the boss.
“Now!”
He had seen Cordellia holding her bow ready, one of the special arrows drawn back.
Tanila’s fireball was above her, prepared to be set free when the moment came.
[Demonic Teleportation]
[Power Strike]
[Magical Strike]
[Weakness]
[Rampage]
Appearing right on the boss’s charging snout, Max unleashed everything he could on the left eye.
His halberd shattered the crystal that was there, tearing through the metal. Gears, pistons and armor sections were gone in a moment. The other two strikes punched deeper, revealing a glowing section within.
As he tried to swing again, the boss jerked its head upward, sending him airborne.
Harpoons came again from different openings at him and, summoning an air wall, Max was pushed off of it, bringing his shield out as he twisted, blocking the two that would have impaled him had the shield not appeared.
The impact sent him soaring through the air, toward the wall.
Spinning like a top, Max heard another roar come as the boss reacted to the arrow that plunged into its other eye, shattering it and leaving it hopefully blind.
Tanila’s fireball erupted over its face, burning the flesh that had regrown.
All in a span of just a few seconds, their attacks had connected as Fowl shouted out.
“Taunt!”
Turning in the air, Max got his feet into position, absorbing the impact with the wall and dropping to the ground.
This new constitution bonus is paying off!
Fowl was going two shields now, obviously having used a skill as the boss swiped at him with a metallic claw, purple and black liquid squirting with every lucky strike that hit the dwarf.
“SHOOT THE EXPOSED AREA!”
He moved to help Fowl as the boss swiped and missed again.
A blazing object raced across the metal area and struck the opening he had created.
It appeared as if a lightning spell struck the boss, jerking randomly before dropping to one knee.
“Get away! Into the tunnel!”
Max grabbed Fowl and sprinted toward the women, clearing the space in just seconds.
Both warriors stood at the opening to the tunnel, holding their shields out as a wall and watched as the boss began to smoke, shuddering more and more.
Smoke that had been drifting upward from the boss started moving downward back toward it.
“All walls!”

Ice, earth and air walls covered the opening, each of them stacked before the other and seven seconds later, the loudest explosion any of them had ever heard came forth.
The walls buckled and creaked as everyone struggled to stay standing.
Max and Fowl both felt objects striking their shields, barely managing to keep from being knocked back by the force.
As quickly as the eruption had taken place, the only sound any of them heard the next moment was the ringing in their ears.

43 Chapter 261 - A Different Level of Loot

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Chapter 261 - A Different Level of Loot

Everyone had their fingers in their ears, even after Batrire had healed them.
The eardrums had ruptured as the sound amplified in the tube they had slid down in, but no one had suffered any major injuries.
As they prepared to move the metal pieces that had been wedged against the opening, in about fifteen seconds, most of it faded, having vanished with any remains of the boss.
“What in a gods arse is that ogre shite?” Fowl muttered. “Who allows a tower to come up with a boss that kills you after you kill it?”
No one replied as they moved from the safety of their tunnel, surveying the carnage before them.
Everywhere were large gouges in the metal wall. A section of the metal covering had been knocked free, leaning partially against the wall.
A crater of upward turned metal plates marked where the boss had died. Some sections of it were over ten yards deep.
Metal chunks were scattered everywhere, and yet no one seemed to notice anything but the treasure chest that awaited them in the middle of the area they had been trapped in.
“That’s not as big as I hoped,” Fowl muttered, ignoring the snicker Cordellia gave.
“I think our ranger earned the right to open this one. Especially since she got the killing shot.”
Laughing, the elf took off across the ground, dodging the debris easily.
“Hey wait!”
Max, Tanila and Batrire all laughed as Fowl chased after Cordellia.
The chest was no bigger than an average dungeon chest and it was made of rust colored metal. Outside there was a gem between simple bands.
“That doesn’t look at all like I expected,” Batrire said as she bent down and touched it.
Cordellia shrugged and went to open the chest, grunting as the lid didn’t budge.
“Something wrong?”
She frowned and ignored Fowl’s question, giving another push, using more muscle this time, and still it didn’t open.
“Bah, let me show you how a dwarf does it,” Fowl proclaimed as he moved up to the chest, putting both hands on the lid and thrusting with everything he had.
A trio of grunts and a red face later, he took a deep breath, gasping at his failed attempt.
“I’m assuming you’re used to not performing how you intended?”

Cordellia’s jab had everyone chuckling except her target as everyone ignored the problem with the chest for a moment.
“You want to try?” Fowl asked, pouting as he moved back a step.
Max nodded and gave a push that should have moved a mountain, yet the lid didn’t even react to the effort.
“I think we all need to touch the chest,” Tanila said as she moved up next to Max and put her hand on the metal lid.
Everyone moved forward and when all five were touching it, the gem on the outside lit up and a click came. Slowly, the lid lifted up on its own.
“Well, that's new,” Max said as he waited for the lid to finish its ascent.
“They are very rare,” Tanila stated as she frowned. “Designed for bosses like the one where we fought. If someone dies, no one gets any loot.”
“That doesn’t seem fair!” exclaimed Fowl as he began to peek inside the chest. “Why would they–”
He stopped talking, jaw still lowered as he looked inside.
Everyone didn’t wait and moved to see what had managed to silent the usually chatty dwarf.
The space below wasn’t the typical purple dimensional storage. This time it was a golden glow and Max felt himself drawn toward the color.
“That’s… nothing I know about.”
Their mage's words fell on deaf ears as each person saw that only seven items were inside.
An orange crystal that appeared far larger than any of the other ones they had collected from the previous floors stood out.
Metal chain boots waited for Max while a rust-colored pair of boots belonged to Batrire. Cordellia had a rust-colored leather helm waiting for her and the last two each had a ring waiting for them. Finally, one item rotated between question marks, not revealing what it would be to the winner of it.
Even with only one item, each something about the items radiated with a unique power.
“I’ll go first,” Max said slowly, unable to keep his hand back any longer.
The pair of boots appeared, but the energy he felt as he reached in was so different. All the exhaustion and stress of that last battle was gone.
As he felt the metal touch his fingers, Max inspected them, his mind in disbelief.
[*Inspect Boots*]
*****
Godwalkers
25% Stat Increase
Touched by Fate - Reset all skill and ability cooldowns. Requires 30 days between uses.
Permanently Bonded - Destroyed upon Death
*****
His eyes read the notification as he tried to consider how something like this could be possible. It wasn’t as far as he knew and for it to meant that somewhere, someone had given great power to grant this.
“Seth?”
Unsure of how many times Tanila had said his name, he shook off the fog and quickly equipped them, feeling the rush of increased stats enter him.
“That good?” Fowl asked.
Nodding slowly, Max pointed at the chest.
“Everyone take theirs. Honestly, don’t share the stats. You’ll know why.”
Each of them moved as one, taking their item, and Max watched their expressions. Pupils dilated, cheeks went flush, jaws dropped and a few of them suffered from hands that shook. Time passed, and no one said a word as each of them took in whatever treasure they held.
Finally, as a group they began to focus on Max and the smirk he had.
“Impossible,” Cordellia whispered. “No one… I mean…”

Each person nodded in agreement, echoing her sentiment.
“We don’t share these stats with anyone,” Max said again. “However we acquired these, they aren’t meant for anyone but you.”
“And the last item?”
Max laughed first and everyone else joined in after.
Sighing, he gave his dwarven friend a gentle tap and grinned.
“Oh, I love you and the dwarf fascination with loot.”
“Hey!” Batrire exclaimed. “It’s not all of us who are loot whores, just Fowl!”
Their dwarven warrior shrugged and tapped the side of the chest.
“I think we all should roll on this one,” he said. “However this ends up, we all had a chance.”
Everyone looked at one another and nodded.
After everyone touched the last item, they waited.
Breaths were held as a twenty-sided sphere with four of each of their faces spun, bouncing and moving around in the space.
As it slowed down and finished its movement, it hung for a moment on an edge, Max’s and Tanila’s face both facing upward.
Finally it moved sideways, landing so that Max was the winner and all the air that had been held in was exhaled.
“Congrats,” Tanila said, her tone carrying a true semblance of excitement for him.
“I should have known,” Fowl sighed before he gave his friend a gentle punch to the gut. “Now show us what you got.
Max snorted and nodded, overwhelmed at what had transpired.
No loot in so long, and now the quality of gear was beyond crazy.
Reaching in, he touched the spot again and pulled back his hand. In it rested a massive piece of black ore. The weight of it was off as it felt light like a feather, but he could tell it was denser than anything he had ever touched.
“What is it? Ore?”
Max nodded at Cordellia and held it out for everyone to look at.
“I can use this,” he said.
“Well, at least it's usable,” Fowl declared as he motioned toward the portal that appeared. “Grab that crystal for Everett and let’s head home. I’m about done with all this.”
Without waiting, Fowl started to move toward the portal.
“Forgive him, he has no manners,” Batrire said as she moved after her man.
Cordellia nodded and followed their healer, leaving Max and Tanila alone.
“So what is it for?”
Max stored the ore and nodded.
“It will work with the dragon’s tooth.”
Her eyes widened, and she smacked her tongue a few times as she took in that knowledge.
“Seriously?”
“It’s the first thing I really know can be used. Nothing Everett or the Faction has is a good match. Whatever kind of metal this will create, it will be useful.”
Shaking her head, she snorted and then tapped her newest ring.
“You want to tell me yours if I tell you mine?”
Frowning, Max knew he was wincing.
“I do… but it might scare you.”
“Why would it scare me?”
“Because what we got wasn’t something anyone would ever receive for at least another fifty floors.”
“That is true… I mean, mine gave me twenty percent to all stats and twenty percent to all spell damage.”
Max whistle in appreciation.
“Any skills or abilities?”
Tanila’s eyes narrowed and she leaned closer.
“So you’re saying yours has an ability.”

Nodding, Max shared it with her and watched as the mage took a step back.
“That name… and that ability… those are…”
She tapped her chin a few times, her cheeks and lips moving as she tried to find words that would be right.
“That’s why I didn’t want anyone else to share with me what they got. You and I both know how the others would react to mine.”
Tanila pointed at the chest where the crystal still waited to be retrieved.
“You going to get that?”
Retrieving the crystal, Max held the orange power source, marveling at how it was twice the size of the others. With his Power Core skill, it now revealed the true power that was waiting for someone like him to tap into.
“There is so much energy inside this. It’s a shame I can’t do anything with it.”
Snorting, Tanila nodded and moved to his side, sliding her arm around his.
“Slow down there… we need to finish the tower before you become a legend. If you do it too soon, I’ll not be worthy of you anymore.”
Laughing, Max stored the gem and gave her a kiss, walking toward the portal.
“We both know I’m the lucky one to be in this relationship.”
***
Bags were visible under Everett’s eyes, and yet the Faction leader was excited at the crystal sitting on his desk.
“You say it blew up after you killed it?”
Max nodded as the older man set another orange crystal beside the new one, showing the difference in size was almost two-thirds.
“Those are rare, but they do happen. I’m really not sure how to compare that to normal as nothing your party does is normal. Still, I need to talk with you about a few other things we’ve been working on.”
Everett moved to the secret storage space and after pulling a chest out, set it on the desk, leaving it open for Max to peer inside.
Multiple items used for crafting were in there, ore, gems, a weird piece of stone and some wood. Pulling each one out and holding it, Max could feel the potential in them, but none sparked his weapon crafting skill like the ore had.
“These will make great weapons and a few would be really good in some armor if you had a person that could make legendary armor.”
Pulling a cloth from storage, Max set it across the desk and laid out the items in order.
“These would probably make one of the best items that I can make right now,” Max said as he pointed at the ore and gem. “Toss in an elemental essence or two and it would be really powerful. These items would be about normal and I’m not sure how the wood would be useful since it’s only about eight inches long.”
Pulling a smaller chest from storage, Everett picked up the ore and gem and put them inside, holding it out toward Max.
“Take them and make something with them. When you need the essence, let me know. I’ll get you whatever I have on hand.”
Frowning, Max waited a moment, but finally took the chest after Everett offered it again.
“Are you sure?”
“Completely. We owe you… no, I owe you for how you have made my job harder, but so much better.”
Both laughed as a yawn escaped right after Everett said those words.
“I have always dreamed of our Faction becoming a powerhouse and now that dream is coming true. Everyone on the council understands that as you and your party rise, we rise. As such, we will funnel a lot more to you.”
“And what about those above us?”
Sitting down, Everett shrugged.
“The only real person who could complain would be Dexic and she sings your praises. Right now she’s waiting for a group to climb with. Losing those two members hurts

and she might join a weaker one, helping them to rise and training them for success.”
Storing the chest with his new crafting materials, Max smiled, glad to hear she wasn’t doing anything stupid.
“Anything else we can do?”
“You can go and encourage the new recruits. They are dying to meet you.”

44 Chapter 262 - A Trip to the Beach https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-5-stubs-1030/chapter/1858203/chapter-262-a-trip-to-the-beach 2024-10-21

Chapter 262 - A Trip to the Beach

“It’s almost done,” Max stated as he watched the fire essence be completely absorbed by the bow he was crafting.
Tanila and Everett were both in there, no longer concerned with the time and how late it really was.
The ore Everett had given him was perfect for the weapon he had envisioned and right where his hand would hold the bow, the grip had the gem set inside it, acting like a slight version of a Power Core, except filled with the magical power he had been infusing into the weapon for the last two days.
Each rune along the metal flared for a moment before going dark, vanishing into the metal, no longer visible.
“Incredible,” Tanila muttered as she watched the amount of magic power the weapon had absorbed.
“I know I’m missing something,” Everett whispered as he leaned closer to her. “What is it?”
“That bow is filled to the brim with magic. Compared to the other weapons we’ve watched him make, none come close.”
Neither said another word as Max tested one last thing, removing the bow from the table.
Cutting his hand, he rubbed the metal from end to end with his blood, watching as it was absorbed.
[Bonded]
[13 Experience]
[*Legendary Bow Created]
Grinning like a fool, he grabbed the grip and watched as a string appeared, bending the bow automatically.
“Dear gods!” Everett exclaimed upon seeing the string appear from nowhere.
[*Inspect Weapon*]
*****
* Legendary Free Bow
+ 150 Dexterity
+ 50 Constitution
Magical Arrows - For five mana a magical arrow can be formed and used with no need to load one from a quiver. Arrows are enchanted.
* May Evolve
Bonded
*****
More teeth appeared as Max pulled back on the string and a glowing arrow appeared out of thin air.
“That’s not possible!”

Slowly, he released the tension and watched as the arrow vanished.
“How? How is this…” Everett stopped his outburst and shook his head.
“You realize that there are maybe three bows in the entire known history that can do what yours just did?”
“I didn’t until just now,” Max stated as he turned and rotated the weapon. “Perhaps I shouldn’t flaunt it too much.”
Both Tanila and Everett groaned and nodded.
“I’d ask to inspect it, but I know that’s not possible,” Tanila said. “Tell me how do you think Cordellia will handle seeing you with something like that?”
“Eventually, I’ll try to make her something like mine, but for now, I can’t do anything about it. You and I both know I don’t use a bow that much.”
A yawn escaped from Everett and the man apologized as Tanila couldn’t resist the urge after him.
“I’m headed to bed… probably dreaming about having a weapon like that in my days of adventuring. You two don’t stay up too late.”
Nodding, Max cleaned off his area, storing the bow and then the unique items as their Faction leader left them alone.
“So tell me, I’m dying to know.”
“One hundred and fifty to dexterity, fifty to constitution and only five mana per arrow.”
“Ogre tits, that’s beyond broken. I may need you to make me something the way you keep creating stuff like that.”
Laughing, he moved around the worktable and gently grabbed her waist, pulling her close.
She wrinkled her nose and shook her head.
“Don’t you think of kissing me until you shower and brush your teeth. You smell.”
Sighing, he let go and gave a slight bow, quickly grabbing the rest of the items on the surface and storing them.
“Well then, I better hurry back and get cleaned up!”
***
The portal hummed with its normal sound, and yet everyone seemed anxious at what was going to be on the other side of the portal.
As they waited, Max considered the changes with his new weapon last night.
[Simple Stat Check]
*****
Max Hoste
18-Year-old Human Male
Level 1
Exp 353/1000
Tower Experience: 36.32%
HP: 9675/9675
MP: 5490/5490
Stamina: 3225/3225
STR: 593
DEX: 640
CON: 645
INT: 549
WIS: 549
*****
“Why are you smiling?” Fowl asked as they waited for their turn to enter.
“Just thinking about what we’ll face today. Perhaps some rivers of ale that can be drank dry or fields of soft bread, tastier than anything I have ever eaten before.”
Grunting, the dwarf rolled his eyes.
“Remind me to never ask that question again.”
Smirking, Max considered the knowledge of what his potential was and yet the idea that somewhere inside the tower, harder things, were still waiting. Whatever or

whoever was directing the things they faced, someone needed to be beaten. Six entire floors and not a single point of stats to be consumed.
“Warrior’s first,” Fowl said as he motioned to the portal.
Nodding, Max summoned his shield and weapon, touching the black portal and selecting the thirty-sixth floor.
Before his eyes worked, Max could smell the hint of salt and heard the sound of water crashing against something.
When his eyes finally focused, there before him was a vast amount of water fifty yards away. Under his feet was sand.
“A beach?”
Storing his weapons, Max bent down and picked up the white sand, feeling it run between his fingers, some of the tiny pieces sticking to his skin.
“A beach? Blast everything!” Fowl cursed. “Dwarves and beaches aren’t a good mix! Especially ones that wear plate armor!”
As the other three came into the tower floor, both elves squealed in delight while Batrire cursed as Fowl had.
“Seems not everyone is excited about a beach,” Max said as he winked at Tanila.
“They don’t swim that well. Big bones and all.”
Cordellia laughed, ignoring the finger Fowl held up toward her.
“Hopefully, we won’t have to swim much,” Max said, pointing at the tower floor before them. “There is a narrow sand path in the water that looks like it heads towards the other island.”
“Sure… because nothing bad ever comes out of an ocean when one walks along the tiny strip of sand,” Fowl replied. “Have you ever been to a beach?”
“Have you?”
His tanking partner scowled at that response.
“No, but it doesn’t matter. Mark my words, before this day is done, you’ll come to hate beaches also!”
Pulling out his weapon, Max nodded and motioned to the sandbar Tanila had just informed him they were called.
“I’ll lead then. Fowl has the back.”
***
The first thirty minutes were a mixture of laughter, some splashing and a lot of complaining as the group trudged through the sand, making sure to stay on the ten-foot section of sand that shifted under their weight.
In the water, tiny fishes and some slightly larger ones were within his sonar range, moving around the narrow strip of sand that quickly dropped off into the water.
It was clear for about twenty feet and then turned dark blue, obscuring their vision any deeper.
Overhead, clouds drifted over the tropical sun and a gentle breeze moved across them and the waves.
The calming effect and seemingly docile nature vanished when Max sensed eight targets suddenly coming straight at them as they moved around a bend on the sand bar.
“Incoming!”
Fish that were six feet long launched out of the water, giant spear-like swords on their noses. Four small legs were on the bottom of their body, but those didn’t seem to matter as they came like arrows at everyone in the group.
Shield out, Max blocked the fish on his left while swinging his weapon at the one on his right.
A wall of air appeared and then a wall of stone, providing protection for Tanila and Batrire.
Cordellia moved with a grace Max always admired, dodging her attacker and sending an arrow into its side as it passed by.
Fowl had three on him, blocking one with his shield, smashing the second fish with his weapon and taking the third one to his side.
A cry of pain came from the dwarven warrior as it struck.

Max saw the damage it had done to Fowl, but it made little sense at the moment and he had better things to worry about.
The first one he struck had lost a large section of its side, having fileted a two-foot section off. It struggled to move along the sand while the other one was darting back toward the water, those tiny legs moving so quickly as it ran.
Tanila had an ice spear forming, but the pair she had stopped were already almost to the water, moving safely away.
Cordellia already had a third arrow in the one she faced and it was limping back toward the water's edge, blood running from the wounds.
Fowl swung at the one that managed to land an attack, yet his swing seemed off.
“I’m slowed!”
Both of Fowl’s other opponents were back at the water's edge, diving in a moment later.
“Get closer!”
Moving to where the one was struggling to retreat, Max brought his weapon down at its head.
[Power Strike]
A wave of cold washed through him and Max grinned as he ran to where everyone was gathering.
[8 Dexterity Consumed]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match beings body type]
[Consume is adjusting skill]
[Consume is unable to adjust skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[Stat Milestone 1 Reached]
[Dexterity of 250 acquired]
[Bonus speed and evasion granted - 20% speed increase]
[Bonus attack speed granted - 20% increase to all attack speeds]
Max almost didn’t stop in time, as the speed at which he now moved with took a moment to adjust to.
His Sonar was trying to read movements that were about to come and Max was trying to handle the rapid change in his body. As Fowl protected the rear and Batrire, Max swung his weapon a few times, sensing the changes as the weapon began to blur.
“Incoming!”
Six came this time, moving just as fast and again were airborne, three focused on Max while the other three went after Fowl.
Summoning a wall of earth, Max protected Fowl’s side where two were coming, allowing his friend to focus on the one.
Tanila’s Ice Spear raced forward, impaling one of his and pinning it to the sand as it pierced it.
Max swung, striking the first fish to reach him and hacking off another large section of its body while blocking the other.
Arrows flew as Cordellia pin cushioned the two that had run into the earth wall.
This time, before a single one could make it back to the water, they were struck down, the element of surprise gone and outdone by the teamwork.
Cold power flooded him again as Max cut down two more fish.
[8 Dexterity Consumed]
[Consume has successfully Consumed a skill]
[Skill does not match beings body type]
[Consume is adjusting skill]
[Consume is unable to adjust skill]
[Power stored for future use]
[8 Dexterity Consumed]
“Everyone okay?”
Fowl grunted and nodded, picking up the fish he bludgeoned to death and storing it.

“They have some weird attack that I guess if it strikes, casts a slow of some sort. For thirty seconds I felt like a slug.”
Max nodded and when nothing else came, they relaxed slightly.
“These are faster than so many of the other creatures we’ve faced lately,” Cordellia stated. “Even out of the water they were fast.”
“That they were. Much faster.”
Tanila gave Max a raised eyebrow, to which he grinned and nodded before moving to retrieve the fish they had just killed.
“Remember what I said!” Fowl shouted. “We’ll hate the beach before this is over!”

45 Chapter 263 - Lessons From Tom

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-5-stubs-1030/chapter/1859517/chapter-263-lessons-from-tom 2024-10-21

Chapter 263 - Lessons From Tom

The waves became larger as they got closer to the first island that had been about three miles away along a winding sand bar.
Some places along the path had become only a few feet wide before water was licking against the sand. Most often those were the perfect places those fish attacked again and again.
Fifty points of dexterity gained before they stopped giving any… this is what I have been missing!
Max almost shuddered from the pleasure that came from those gains. After so long without a single stat from the tower, it was like a flood inside his body. Only once did the memory of what it had felt like when gaining skills from those elves bubble up, but he immediately stamped it down.
Trees with coconuts and other fruit Tanila pointed out were harvested, stored for later enjoyment she promised and a quarter mile wide island was little more than a small resting area before the next decision before them.
“Right or left… which path?”
Max hoped someone else would have an opinion as each led in a different direction and the tiny dot of what had to be an island was way off in the middle of both.
“Joys of being the leader,” Fowl teased. “You get to pick.”
Grumbling, he fetched a gold coin and flipped in the air.
“Molly we go right, Macy we go left.”
As Max snatched it from the air, the decision was already known, his mind being able to detect the side that would be up.
“Seems we’re going left.”
***
This sand bar sank and rose, sometimes as wide as ten feet and other times knee deep.
A little over a third of a mile in, as they trudged through the water at their knees, Max called out the incoming attack.
This time it wasn’t fish, but instead from under the sand giant crabs began to appear. Each one was about eight feet wide and their claws were almost three feet long. Five white shell crabs rushed at them from all sides, water like jets streaming from their mouths in an apparent attempt to blind or disorient them.
A spray of water was sent upward as Max ran through the water so fast he surprised the crab on his left.
[Power Strike]

The hammer came down, pulverizing the space between the eyes, cutting off the spout of water it had been sending, while punching through the hard shell.
Dashing back toward the one on the other side, Max had reached it, sending a wall of water over his own party and creating waves.
Tanila ignored the water attack from both the crabs and Max, aiming the ice spear she had started casting the moment he called out the attack.
She sent it directly into the mouth where the water came from. Immediately, the spout was gone, and the crab appeared to be dancing as its claws clicked and clacked upon the spear that was lodged inside its body.
Cordellia unleashed an empowered shot that mimicked Tanila's spell placement. One moment a stream was coming at her, the next, the crab's two plates imploded, a spray of flesh expelled from where the liquid had been exiting.
Max's next attack struck where the claw connected to the shell, cutting through the joint, disarming it and repeating the attack as his weapon moved so quickly none could have kept up with it.
Before the wall of seawater was down and the waves had hit his party, three more strikes struck the crab, ending its life and sending a cold wave once more.
[8 Constitution Consumed]
[8 Constitution Consumed]
Turning, Max watched as the last crab that had been coming for Fowl stopped its charge, skittering back into the darkness of the water and vanishing below.
"Slow down!" Tanila belted out, her hair and robes drenched as she spewed saltwater from her mouth. "You're almost more dangerous than those crabs were."
The others called out their agreement of her assessment, and Max watched as the waves he created collided with the ones coming from the sea.
"Sorry, I didn't realize that would happen."
A few chuckles came finally as Max and Fowl moved to collect some parts from their latest opponents.
"How fast are you?" Tanila whispered as she waded to where he was at.
"I hit the first milestone in Dexterity. Twenty percent increase to movement speed."
Coughing again, Tanila shook her head and grunted.
"When you manage that for the last two stats, you realize I'm going to hate you for a little bit."
Grinning, he nodded and winked, over exaggerating slow movement as he went to the first crab he had struck down.
***
Three islands later, they camped for the night, having cut down some trees and built a small barrier.
Max found himself once again capped at two hundred and ninety-five in his Constitution, the same number as his Dexterity.
Glancing at the notebook as he sat by the fire, letting the others sleep, his face wore a frown.
These stats are way higher than I expected. Without those first six levels to go off of, I'm not certain what the max number is, but it has jumped at least twenty or so points above what I thought.
Putting his list away, Max gazed up at the massive moon that was hidden by clouds, listening to the sound of the waves that sounded so peaceful as they crashed against the island.
It was almost enough to lull one into a sense of safety as he sat there, letting his sonar run free as he dozed.
***
"Keep moving!"
The group followed Fowl as the water rose, now up to the dwarf's chest.
Around them tentacles had risen from the deep water near them. Only three hundred yards away was an island, offering some sanctuary from the newest attacker.

Every time the fifteen foot tentacles rose up, they would slam down at them, sending powerful waves of water even when they missed, causing the footing for each member to slip.
“I’m trying, but I can’t swim!” Fowl shouted as he let Tanila push him from behind.
Cursing, Max saw the trio of new glowing tentacles start to rise. They were a weird blue color, glowing when out of the water but completely hidden inside of it.
Only his sonar allowed him to sense them coming through the water, and Max had stopped counting at the number he had sheared off as they came from all angles.
“Wall boost me now!”
Max nodded and summoned an earth wall before Fowl, angled so they easily climbed it while casting his air one right on the edge of it.
All five of them scrambled upward as Tanila unleashed the lightning storm, bolts crashing down upon the would-be attackers from under the water.
For fifteen seconds, over thirty lightning bolts struck the surface of the ocean near them and anything that appeared.
Smoking flesh rose from where it had struck the ones preparing to attack.
“We got ten seconds!”
Max stored his weapon and grabbed Cordellia, tossing her over his shoulder and ignoring her surprised yelp.
“I’m carrying you!” he shouted as he grabbed Batrire, flinging her on the other and then tossing Tanila upward.
“Close your mouth!” Max shouted as he grabbed Fowl under his arms and raced off the wall of air, hitting the water, legs moving.
Water sprayed as he ran, and as he slowly began to sink, a vast wall of water rushed over them and around them.
“Angle your shield!” Max yelled as he held Fowl higher.
Soon the large shield was vertical, angled forward at the top and they cut through the water like a boat.
Fifty yards from land the water was down to their waist and as a pair of tentacles came up from the water behind him, Max was already gone, sending up a cloud of sand as he sprinted onto the island and weaved around its outside as he slowed.
Sputtering and coughing came from his group as he set them down, everyone once again drenched from the initial wave that had washed over them.
“What were those?” Batrire asked as she regained her breath. “I didn’t see any other beast underneath the water.”
“I couldn’t sense it either. Whatever was down there had to be more than one based on the number of tentacles we faced. Surely if it was a single one, then it would have given up, knowing it was losing limbs and not having any success.”
Wringing out his beard, Fowl cursed, holding a finger over one nostril and blowing out a stream of snot and water.
“I’ve never been more waterlogged in my life.”
Cordellia was turning, and Max saw where she was pointing.
“The portal!”
Everyone snapped in the direction of her finger and started jogging toward it, ready to be done with the tower floor.
***
“You each will need to keep these until at least the boss,” Tom said as he gave the five of them a ring that felt slippery as they held it. “Don’t wear them until you need them as they only have three days' worth of breathing when under water before they run out.”
“Like, what happens then?” Fowl asked, wincing for the answer he knew was coming.
“You drown.”
Gulping, the dwarf nodded and stored the ring as everyone else had.
“Water tower floors can be so different,” their trainer continued. “Each floor has the ability to be a combination of above water or under it. Some have vast cave systems underneath. Only a few are completely underwater, and those are typically very difficult because of how water slows down most people.”

“Is there any way to not suffer that slowdown?”
Looking like he had sucked on a lemon, Tom slowly shook his head side to side.
“There are, but not that most people will have it. Some might have an ability, but again they are so rare I can only think of one person I’ve ever known with one. Even magic that allows that is hard to find. Just getting rings of underwater breathing costs a sizeable chunk of money. Those rings will slowly regain their ability over time but it's an hour exposed to air for an hour under water. Which means you can’t store it in your dimensional space.”
Tom dropped a bag that appeared in his hand and gave it to Max.
Opening it revealed some web-like feet items.
“Those are called fins. They will take some getting used to but you’ll be able to fit them over boots, shoes and even bare feet. The magic in them will expand or shrink to the size they need to be. It will help you swim with armor and cut down on some of the weight and resistance of your body, but practice with them for a bit.”
He demonstrated swinging his arm at normal speed and then repeated the process at about half speed.
“You will find your attacks don’t hit as hard. Piercing weapons often do more as you thrust them. Hammers usually are even worse.”
Fowl groaned again at that news.
“Tanila, you are going to have to figure out how to cast spells, taking into account that ice and stone will probably only work and that lightning isn’t a good choice. Cordellia, your arrows will still work, not as well, again slowed by the water. Placement will mean everything.”
Setting his gaze upon Batrire, Tom smiled softly.
“You are going to have to pay attention to where everyone is and possibly work at maneuvering around more. Monsters have a way of locking in on a healer and with your party not able to respond as quickly, you need to learn how to move in the water. Do you understand?”
She nodded, tugging on her beard absently as she felt the danger behind his words.
“All I can say is to be smart. I have no doubt you five can handle whatever the tower throws at you.”
Max knew whatever came next, this series of tower floors were going to be a whole new test for them.
Smiling, he ignored the raised eyebrow Tom gave him.
Ever since the colosseum and that sensation of growth, Max had struggled with the lack of gains lately. The thirty-sixth dungeon floor awoke the sleeping giant of how great the skill increases were.
Those tentacles put me at a three hundred and one strength… god I missed that sensation.

46 Chapter 264 - Swimming with Sharks

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Chapter 264 - Swimming with Sharks

“I guess it’s a good thing that this floor wasn’t the first,” Max stated as the party gazed across the half quarter mile of water that was covered in a rocky cave.
Lights shimmered underneath, different plants and the bioluminescence that glowed within casting oranges, purples, blues and pinks in the water.
Handing a pair of the fins to each person, everyone sat down on the sand, slipping them over their shoes.

“I’d make sure your belt is cinched up,” Fowl said as he pointed at Batrire. “If your robe starts to cover your head and everyone gets a view below, don’t blame me.”
A hint of red filled their healer's cheeks as she double checked her belt, Tanila mimicking the process as well.
“We’ll need to go slow and figure this out, as I wasn’t a horrible swimmer, but we all know Fowl is going to sink like a rock.”
“A metal rock,” their dwarven warrior added as he waddled toward the edge of the water, struggling to move in plate armor and fins on land.
***
Thirty minutes of practice was spent swimming near the entrance to the tower floor, overcoming the fear of needing to breathe, as well as the problems with moving around.
Fowl struggled the most, being almost half his normal speed while the Tanila and Batrire were about a third slower.
Cordellia was darting around, only about twenty percent slower than usual, while Max impressed everyone as always with his seemingly unchanged movement.
“It’s the boon,” Max whispered to Tanila as they swam near each other.
She giggled and both of them smiled.
“You sound so weird. The water makes everyone's voice hollow.”
Nodding, he shouted, knowing it wouldn’t travel as far, but in a few seconds, the rest of the group had gathered close.
“We know how stuff works now. Fowl will stay close to you three as he can’t react fast enough,” Max said, ignoring his friend's frown. “Tanila has the air wall to help him maneuver if needed or for blocking. Those spells are slower as we saw from testing and that means Cordellia, you’re our main point of ranged damage.”
“Besides you,” she scoffed.
“Yes, I’m going to play out ahead and do what I can to minimize any potential large groups from surrounding you all. In the end, we need to get moving as I have no idea how many days this floor is going to take and if there is anywhere to recharge our rings.”
Pointing at the quarter mile wide tunnel that led down, Max started to swim slowly, making sure that Fowl and the others were able to keep up.
As they moved toward the underwater cave system, Max couldn’t help but be amazed at all the different small fish that swam around, darting and dodging as they got near or other slightly larger fish got close. Sea life with tiny tentacles moved with the water, pulsing with light and illuminated the stone they were attached too.
A whole different world appeared before him.
***
“More Sharks!”
Tanila’s shout was almost impossible to hear as Max swung his halberd, using the wall of air he had just summoned to kick off of and dodge the fifteen foot long shark that had charged at him.
Blood was everywhere and the pack of three he had first faced was down to the last one.
When he struck the first attacker and sliced off a chunk of its face, all three seemed to enter a berserker state, thrashing and attacking faster.
Their weakness was turning, but when coming at him they were like an arrow almost from the speed at which they moved.
Two more red sharks came from the tunnel ahead, blazing forward at that same speed.
Huge lines of glowing pink light ran along both sides of the creatures, making their movements weird to see in the water.
The second shark had returned and as it came toward him, that giant mouth filled with countless teeth, Max began summoning an ice spear.
[Power Strike]
The axe blade cut through the shark from chin to tail as Max pushed off his ice spear, using it to reposition and avoid the charge.

Gore and guts entered the water, making it murky and sending the third shark into a rage again.
It was turning and based on the two new approaching ones, they would be attacking at the same time.
More mana poured into the ice spear, growing larger as the trio drew close.
The spell Tanila had formed was still waiting.
Left hand held high, the remaining seconds passed and Max dropped it, knowing her spell was going to be coming toward one of his foes.
Her stone spear raced through the water at the left one as his ice spear went for the shark on the right.
Bringing his shield out, Max prepared to block the last shark from the original three.
Tanila's spell hit her target, colliding with its upper jaw and nose, causing the shark to writhe in pain as the stone stuck out from it.
His spear missed as the shark moved slightly to the side, avoiding it by less than a foot.
A crunching sound came as teeth wrapped around his shield, clamping down and thrashing as the shark couldn't close its mouth or swallow Max.
The new shark arrived, biting down on Max's weapon that was thrust toward its face.
Five feet of the shaft was swallowed as teeth clamped down and onto his arm.
Pain flared as the teeth felt like a vice closing tightly on his forearm. The armor held but he still bled as those tips pierced some of the links, increasing the rage at which these sharks seemed possessed by.
[Regeneration]
Both sharks now thrashed and fought against Max as he held onto his weapon and shield. Sometimes they tried to push toward each other and most of the time it was pulling him apart.
Arrows struck the shark on his weapon and soon an ice spear plunged into its side, causing the creature to finally go limp, allowing him to yank his arm free.
Slashing with his now free weapon, Max hacked at the shark's nose, realizing it was a weak spot on this beast. Its own grip on his shield gave Max the ability to deliver stronger blows without having to worry about kicking his feet to set up for the strike.
Soon, only one injured shark remained, and a final spell from him ended its life.
With the threat gone, the other four swam closer, helping to collect some of the body parts and the orange crystals that appeared.
"Glad you're getting bit on and not me," Fowl stated. "How did they not tear you limb from limb?"
"It's all the strength I've gained from carrying you around when I run."
Chuckling, his dwarven friend nodded and pointed at the tunnel that continued to descend.
"It's a good thing the tunnel doesn't have any off branches at the moment. Means we can only be attacked from one path."
"True, but if something makes it past me, you're our only hope."
Grinning, Fowl nodded and kicked his feet, trying to adjust his positioning a little as the others gathered again.
"Nice work on that fight," Cordellia said. "Sorry, most of my arrows missed until they were still. I think I'm getting the speed and leading down and should be able to hit them."
"Don't complain, I missed, and I was only twenty yards away when I sent my spell. This water makes it tough."
***
Over six hours of steady fighting of shark packs began to subside as the group swam downward now, bright light appearing underneath them.
"It's a city," Tanila said, as they saw the massive world beneath them take shape.
A large circular system of buildings was arrayed beneath them. One section was enormous, while all around it were smaller circles of buildings. Each one appeared to be on a round platform and then rose upward in round buildings made of rock, metal, and something else.

Lights streamed from so many different areas that it looked like stars in the water. Some sections had large lighted areas, almost blinding to stare at.
“Look at all those creatures,” Batrire said as she pointed to a section of the city where it appeared something was taking place and from this distance so many creatures were moving.
“Water people… or merfolk if that is their real name,” Tanila stated, her eyes drinking in everything possible. “Only two books ever mentioned a race like this. Some are known for being just like other races, while the opposite is nothing more than a savage group that eats everything, including themselves.”
“Did that book mention which one built a city?”
Shaking her head, Fowl sighed at not getting a solid answer.
“Does this mean they might be friendly and not attack us?”
Tanila shrugged, seeing Max frown slightly.
“The information was more about the race and their culture. Somehow, based on the size of the city below and the number of lights we see, I’m not sure we can fight that many.”
As they swam in place, Cordellia pointed at some moving figures.
“Looks like we’re about to find out that answer soon enough.”
A group of eight individuals, all toned and muscular, moved toward them with a speed that spoke of haste, and yet Max could tell they were not moving at their top speed.
Six of them were male, wearing armor made from something he couldn’t recognize, holding spears and a shield. With them came two women that wore loose fitting outfits that glided with their bodies and carried what looked like a staff and not a spear. All of their hair was jet black, and scales covered their skin. Almost like a snake’s hide, it was so tiny one might not notice as he had.
As they drew closer, the group slowed down, spears held out slightly and spread out. They shouted something and Max tapped his ears, shaking his head.
A few murmured, and then one of the women rotated a bangle on their wrist.
Once more they called out, getting no response from the party and rotated it again.
Five attempts later, Max and the others all heard words they finally understood.
“Why have you entered our home?”
Max looked at Tanila, who shook her head and motioned to him.
“We are here because the tower has brought us here. A portal to leave is somewhere in this area and we are seeking it.”
Expressions changed as their lips drew together and eyes narrowed, highlighting the dark black eyes they had.
“A tower climber? In our world? Impossible! That has not happened in–”
The male, who appeared to be the biggest of the group, went silent as one woman touched his shoulder.
“Forgive him. If you are what you say, we will need to take you to meet our King and prove this. Know that if you are lying, we will kill you and feed you to our pets.”
Max wanted to laugh at the way the woman’s tone had changed from a simple command to a threat in so few words.
“We would be honored to meet your King and prove that we are who you say we are.
Chatter between the eight took place once more and after what appeared to be some unhappy discussion, the group sent one of the men back toward the city.
“We will wait for more to come before we escort you to our King. My name is Joza Nar. Put your weapons away and do not make any sudden moves, and I promise upon my gills that you will not be harmed.”
Max nodded and everyone stored their weapons and shields, monitoring the seven who were just as keenly studying them.
“Never a dull moment,” Fowl muttered.

47 Chapter 265 - A Challenge Before Them

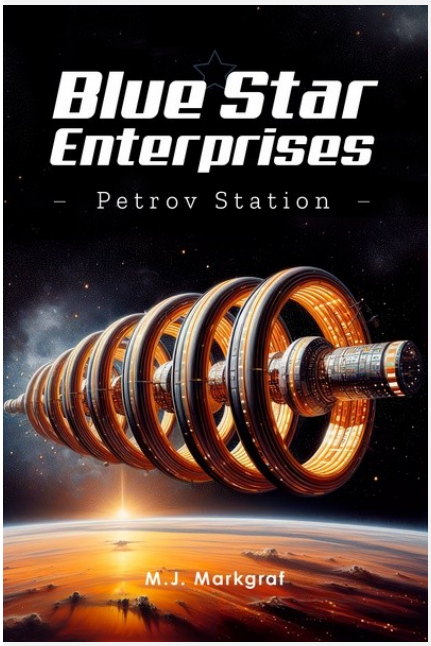
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-5-stubs-1030/chapter/1862761/chapter-265-a-challenge-before-them 2024-10-23

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

In a distant future, Alexander wakes to a reality where his past is a fog and his consciousness inhabits a robot body. Faced with a fragmented memory and an uncertain future, he embarks on a quest for answers. Amidst the hum of his repair shop, where he scrapes by, he delves into the mystery of his transformation.

As Alexander forges ahead, stitching together the threads of his identity, unexpected companions join his journey. Among them is a precocious girl whose presence sparks forgotten emotions, offering a glimpse of his lost humanity. Yet, in the shadows, lurk those drawn by his technological prowess, casting ominous shadows over his path.

Caught between the pursuit of understanding and the threat of those who covet his abilities, Alexander confronts a pivotal question: will he succumb to adversity or emerge from the crucible stronger than before?



https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/88287/blue-star-enterprises

Chapter 265 - A Challenge Before Them

Less than twenty minutes later the party was being escorted by over forty merfolk through the city.

The size of it felt like swimming through Peltagow except instead of being so spread out, it reached upward with buildings at least five times to twenty times taller. Everywhere merfolk were watching as they swam toward the largest building at the center, seeing siege weapons and other spear based systems scattered across the buildings.
“It’s like they expect someone to attack them?” Fowl asked as they moved downward.
“Not someone, but something,” Max replied. “Those weapons are designed for something much larger than you or I. Even those things would be overkill on the sharks we fought.”
Tanila grunted and Max nodded, noticing how the escort didn’t appear to appreciate them chatting about the defenses of their city.
***
“Kneel before King Jalnig Nuk, defender of our home!”
Everywhere all the merfolk that were standing in the room they had entered, except heavily armored guards, were on their knees.
Max and the others quickly joined them, heads up unlike the rest as they studied the man sitting on a throne made of rainbowed colored glass. His hair was blond, braided in long locks, and those blue eyes of his seemed to try to peer into their souls.
Ornate armor that changed colors as he shifted decorated the mass and height of the king, who was two feet taller than all the other merfolk.
Beside him, a few steps down, stood a woman in a robe similar to their escorts, except weird markings were etched into the fabric. A staff with similar markings was in her hand.
The king nodded as he leaned forward, ignoring the ten foot tall trident that was just a few feet from him, leaning against his throne.
Nodding once, the woman chanted something and banged her staff into the ground three times.
Pressure in the vast room over seventy yards wide, set like a cylinder, changed and Max saw that the water was rushing upward, leaving from the floor and moving toward the ceiling.
As it did, the scales on the merfolks skin disappeared, turning a dark tan and mimicking human, dwarf and Elven flesh. Their hair changed colors as well when the water had moved past their heads, turning blond while Jalnig Nuk’s hair became red.
“Our King has granted you an audience in your own air. See this for what it is, a gift.”
Max gave a bow of his head at the king, feeling like the woman near him would much rather skin the flesh off his body.
When Jalnig Nuk spoke his voice carried across the whole room, almost as if one spoke into a megaphone. Deep and rich, it washed over them with authority and power.
He has a skill…
Max almost asked what, but instead focused on the man before him.
“You claim to be tower climbers, brought here by the system to a place not visited by your kind in so long I had to have my advisors search the records. Tell me, how can you prove you are here by what you claim?”
Slowly Max stood, ignoring the glare the woman gave him, and summoned a handful of different gems acquired from each of the tower floors they had leveled up through.
“These are the gems we earn as we climb the tower. The orange ones are what we have dropped by the sharks we faced on the way to you all.”
“Lies!”
Both the king and Max turned toward the woman who was pointing her staff at the party.
“That color does not come from where our records show!”
A frown appeared on Jalnig Nuk’s face and Max saw the king studying him.
“I cannot tell you what color was once given to the groups that came before us, but this is what we have received. If you have another way for us to prove ourselves, I am open to hearing it.”

His advisor’s mouth started to move, and a grunt came from the king, causing her to clamp it shut and turn toward him. Those blue eyes locked on the woman and she shuddered, bowing her head low.
“As it has been said, much time has passed since the records were written and I cannot argue with them, but it would be foolish of me to not provide another option to prove that what you say is true.”
Leaning back in his chair, the king lifted a hand to his chin and tapped it a few times. Max could feel every eye except for the ones of those who were guards upon the king as he sat there, face set like flint as he stared at the party.
Silence echoed on for moments as no one spoke and appeared to not breathe even.
“Tell me, what is your name?”
“I go by the name Seth Pendal in my world,” Max said.
“You are the strongest of your party, and it appears you are their leader as well. Will you be willing to prove yourself in a fight against one of my champions?”
Keeping his face straight, Max stood a little taller, making sure he reached his top height of five feet six inches and nodded.
“I am not afraid to fight, but I would ask what kind of fight you have in mind. Needless bloodshed is not something I seek.”
The slightest movement of agreement came as Jalnig Nuk smiled.
“It is a fight without weapons or armor set in our arena. Defeat my champion, and we will accept your words as truth. Power and strength are how we measure one's heart.”
Bowing his head slightly, Max grinned.
“I would be honored to prove to you the truth of my words and the strength I possess.”
The King clapped once, his hands sending a shockwave across the room.
“The challenge has been set and accepted. Inform the people to gather at the arena!”
Max noticed the woman at the bottom of the steps before the king’s throne smirking.
Obviously, this would appear to them like I’m about to get my ass kicked.
***
“Are you certain this was the best plan?” Fowl asked as they stood in a small room waiting for Max to be escorted onto the massive floor of sand that was surrounded by countless merfolk cheering and shouting.
“We couldn’t fight this many people and even if I could, I would prefer not to kill someone who doesn’t attack first,” Max replied. “Besides, this feels off. I’m not certain, but this floor must usually come later in the tower.”
“In the late forties?” Tanila asked.
Shaking his head, Max pointed at the stone wall and punched it. Nothing came from his attack as the wall stood there, completely unscratched.
“I didn’t hit it with everything I have, but that would have shattered most of the walls I’d assume at our own colosseum back home.”
“Which means this is designed for a higher level tower climber.”
Nodding, Max turned his attention back to the window. Water stopped right outside of it, leaving them in a well lit room with chairs and regular air to breathe.
“The sound of the crowds tells me whatever is about to happen is starting soon. No matter what, you four be ready if things don’t work out.”
Max handed Tanila the gem that would take the party from the tower floor if broken.
“Are you that afraid?”
Ignoring the tremor in her voice and the concerned expressions on everyone else's, Max shook his head.
“Just smart enough to be prepared.”
Four loud gongs sounded out ten seconds later and a pair of guards knocked on the door before opening.
“It is time,” one declared.
Nodding, Max gave Tanila a quick kiss and moved to the doorway, where a wall of water waited for him to enter.

***
“Citizens of Melihar! Today we have a rare chance to witness our champion face one who claims to be a tower climber!”
The sound of the cheers and roars was almost deafening as Max turned around, watching the merfolk who had packed almost every spot he could see.
“Today this one, Seth Pendal, shall face the only one worthy to defend the honor of us. Our King, Jalnig Nuk!”
Cursing to himself, Max knew the other shoe had finally dropped as from across the sand, Jalnig Nuk moved to the front of his spot at the base of the arena wall and waved to his people. One moment he had his full armor and trident in hand, a cloak somehow perfectly moving behind him, the next he was in a tiny pair of trunks.
A giant grin was plastered upon the blond-headed king’s face as he swam from where he stood right toward Max.
“It would appear you might have thought something like this would happen,” Jalnig Nuk declared, still grinning as he motioned to Max’s outfit. “Are you going to wear those metal boots?”
“Forgive me, but they are what my fins are attached to so I can swim in the water, though obviously not as well as you do.”
Max stood there in a pair of leather pants, no shirt, and wearing his chain boots. His rings were still equipped but everything else was stored, as it appeared the king had done as well.
“Very well. Tell me, how far would you like this fight to go?”
Looking up at Jalnig Nuk who stood almost three feet taller than him, Max couldn’t help but appreciate the king’s body. Every inch of it was toned and rippling with muscle.
While his own body didn’t have any fat, his own muscle mass had stalled out, not growing near as much as he wished.
“What are the rules usually?”
“Until one is knocked unconscious or surrenders.”
Nodding, Max cracked his neck.
“Skills are allowed?”
Jalnig Nuk’s grin displayed more teeth, and the man nodded.
“It would be recommended that you use some.”
“One last question,” Max said as Jalnig Nuk began to back up a few paces. “If I accidentally kill you with one punch, what happens?”
A loud booming roar of laughter came from the king and then from the entire gathered audience, all apparently able to hear what he had just said.
“Then you will be king and required to choose a mate, forever trapped here until one takes your place.”
Sighing, Max moved backward himself, watching as the king moved with a grace that left no doubt, this man was confident in his abilities.
The gong came and, crouching slightly, the king began to approach, moving sideways as he studied Max.
“You’re going to have to come to me,” Max said, not willing to move and give up the small amount of stability he felt at the moment.
Jalnig Nuk movement looked like a combination of swimming and regular walking. As if somehow he could choose between acting like he was on dry land or submerged underwater.
“If you wish!”
Sand flew up as the king dashed forward, fist coming with a speed that would have impressed anyone but Max.
Keeping his boots on were for an obvious reason, not because his fins were attached to them, but the twenty-five percent they granted in overall stats was too much to give up. With the previous floor's gains, even the fact the sharks hadn’t given a single point didn’t matter.
[*Stat Only Check*]
*****

STR: 560
DEX: 549
CON: 549
INT: 459
WIS: 459
*****
Staying where he was, Max deflected the large hands that came toward him, pushing them sideways and redirecting the king’s attacks.
Kicks, punches and even a headbutt moved with blazing speed and yet Max couldn’t help but grin.
His Sonar told him everything about the attacks as they came. Watching the massive man raining down blows began to smile even more as his speed at which the strikes were delivered increased.
“Finally!” Jalnig Nuk shouted. “A real opponent!”
Jumping backward, the man let out a beastial roar which sent waves of power through the water.
Be ready, he has unleashed that which holds him back.
Max grinned, ready for the first real fight in a long time.

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Good news! UL1's 1 year anniversary is Nov 1st and book 5 hits on Amazon that day!

If you're up for it, check it out and leave a great review if you're loving the series! Early reviews always helps the Amazon success!

Book 6 starts 11/4!

48 Chapter 266 - A Life Ending Challenge https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-5-stubs-1030/chapter/1864409/chapter-266-a-life-ending-challenge 2024-10-25

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/64262/son-of-flame-fire-fighter-litrpg

Johnathan 'Tilly' Tillman almost makes it through his last shift at the station when he catches a fire call that changes everything.

He will have to keep his wits sharp and his axes sharper to stay one step ahead, as he is thrust into a crumbling empire full of monsters and magic.

Thankfully, a little well-applied fire can solve most problems - and Tilly knows fire.

> Weak to Strong MC

> Character Driven

> Firefighter Isekai written by an actual Firefighter.

> Unique Build, Front Line Fighter

Release schedule: Monday and Thursday

Chapter 266 - A Life Ending Challenge

Skin stretched and the merfolk king which was between eight and nine feet now, grew. His body expanded, muscles getting larger until he stood almost fourteen feet tall.

Huge knuckled fists hung down as the king glared at him through red eyes.

The scales had taken on a dark red tone, and at least two hundred pounds, if not more of mass, had just appeared from nowhere. The tiny pair of trunks looked to be holding on by a thread, somehow wedged between the folds of muscle and joints.

The arena erupted in roars of approval.

“Try not to die!”

Max dodged backward as the first attack came, slamming downward at the spot he had been, sand filling the air and a crater three feet deep in the floor now present.

The power of the strike washed over Max as the water shifted, and he maneuvered as quickly as possible, following the now sped up and improved speed of the one he faced.

Heat radiated off of Jalnig Nuk, causing the water to bubble off his skin.

Evasion was working overtime as Sonar told Max where each strike was coming and instead of blocking, every attack had to be avoided, unsure how much damage would be done if one managed to hit.

Hit him!

Max ignored his skill, getting a feel for a monster that obviously knew how to fight with his bare hands. Not having a skill left Max open the moment he threw a punch, and that kept him from acting.
As they moved, more heat came from the king’s skin, extra bubbles rising from everywhere water touched him.
Roots struggled to appear in the sand, giving the red rampaging giant before him pause as he looked down at what was attempting to grab at his ankles.
Max summoned a wall of stone, lifting the king off the sand for a moment as the wall appeared right against his ankles.
Throwing a punch, Max struck at the arm he had just dodged, slamming into the outer part of the king's left forearm. The force caused the king to spin in the water, his body twisted sideways for a moment, head coming down low.
Swinging with his left arm, Max aimed for that large head full of wild blond hair, only to watch a grin appear on Jalnig Nuk’s face and his eyes go wide.
Speed that was impossible to believe caused the king to spin, his left arm coming for Max as the twist in the water moved him faster and left with no other choice, Max connected his punch while blocking the fist the size of his head with his right arm.
Both he and Jalnig Nuk flew backward, the impact from each other sending the pair over forty yards away through the water.
[Regeneration]
His right arm had been fractured but was already healing, and Max saw the king climb to his feet and stare at him.
“Worthy!”
Roaring again, the water seemed to now boil off the scales as they turned a bright red and Jalnig Nuk grew another two feet.
Like an arrow the King covered the distance in a second, only to find an air wall right where his face was, sending him upward and off target from the attack he had been trying to do.
[Power Strike]
Max’s fist flashed as it connected with the knee, wishing for a better target but taking what he could.
The crack that came and the way the knee bent sideways surprised Max, having expected the whole joint to be destroyed.
Instead, as Jalnig Nuk tumbled through the water, his left leg flopping behind him from the knee down, Max jumped on the man’s back, grabbing on to the hair, ignoring the heat that burnt his flesh.
[Weakness]
[Magical Strike]
[Rampage]
A howl of agony from the red beast came as Max punched at the collarbone of Jalnig Nuk.
The first punch shattered the bone while the other shoved them deeper inside the flesh, almost to the point of pushing through the burning skin.
The left arm tried to grab him but Max dodged to the king’s injured right side, avoiding the flailing attempts.
“Surrender and I will stop!”
“Never!”
Max started punching the same spot, over and over, dozens of hits striking as Jalnig Nuk held himself up on the sand with one arm and one knee, bent over, boiling water coming from him.
Get away now!
Whatever his skill sensed, Max didn’t hesitate, letting go of the braids of hair he had been holding and kicking himself off the brute's massive back.
Pain washed over him as Jalnig Nuk roared once more, sending out shockwaves of power.

The injuries that Max had inflicted were healing, and the sand beneath the king's body began to melt. Water evaporated as quickly as it got within a foot of the now twenty-two foot tall blazing red and orange behemoth.
Lava seemed to almost flow from the king's skin, and he stood, turning to face Max, eyes burning with anger and confusion.
"What have you done?!"
The weakness!
Grinning, Max laughed and pointed at the towering monster before him.
"I'm not done yet, but if I had to guess, you're running out sooner than later. We can call this a draw or–"
Another roar came, and it became so bright that Max couldn't see. It was as if he stared at the sun.
"NOOO! I SHALL END THIS!"
Evasion and Sonar couldn't match what came for him. Even his mind struggled to handle what was taking place.
[Armored Warrior]
[Bulwark]
[Evasion]
Every wall he could summon was gone in an instant.
A punch that would level cities came.
For a second, agonizing pain worse than anything Max had ever felt struck.
It was as if his entire being was torn apart, every bit of his body flung in different directions as the fist that was over three feet wide struck his chest.
An eternity of pain was there, and then it was gone.
[Negate Death Blow]
Power washed around him and the arena, and Max saw the light immediately fade from a blazing sun to a barely burning ember.
The massive giant that had to have been at least thirty or more feet tall was now back to his normal size, floating in the water, hovering above the blackened rock six feet down.
Max realized all the sand for twenty yards was gone, vaporized. Beyond that area were three feet of sand that was bubbling like lava, slowly flowing toward the empty hole.
Silence was everywhere as not a single spectator in the arena made a sound.
Max moved slowly to where the king was, barely breathing, his body limp like a wet noodle.
"Do you surrender?"
Jalnig Nuk turned his head slightly. His closed eyes became slits that had a very dim pair of blue eyes trembling at the man next to him.
"I… surrender…"
His breathing was ragged, and a gong sounded, yet not a single sound still was heard anywhere else.
Pulling a healing potion out, Max held it before Jalnig Nuk's eyes and pulled back a lid.
"Can you use this? Will it heal you?"
A slight nod of the head was all the king could give, so Max uncorked the bottle and put it in the king's lips, letting him drink the advanced healing potion.
The flesh around the king began to quiver, and Max could see the color in his face and scales become brighter.
"You… you are a tower climber… your strength proves it," Jalnig Nuk said as his body rotated, allowing him to stand on the stone with Max. "Tell me… how many are like you?"
Chuckling, Max gave the king a gentle clap on the arm and shook his head.
"I'm the only one."
Weak laughter came at first and slowly grew louder, filling the area they were in as the king grabbed Max's hand and raised his arm high.
"Celebrate for the new champion! Seth Pendal!"

Cheers and the sound of tens of thousands stomping their feet filled the arena as Jalnig Nuk slowly spun Max around, showing him off to the crowd.
“Perhaps we should retire somewhere a little quieter and where both of us can recover?”
More laughter came from Jalnig Nuk as he shook his head before nodding.
“You are not tired and I can tell it, but I appreciate you trying to save me face. Come. Let us gather your allies and find somewhere we can talk in private.”
***
“It saved you,” Tanila said as she spoke quietly in Max’s ear, feigning a kiss. “What I saw was… my heart almost gave out till I saw you there, unhurt.”
Moving her head, Max stood on his toes and gave her a kiss, pulling her close, ignoring the looks he knew those gathered were giving.
“Seth Pendal, you are very fortunate to not only be strong but have someone who loves you,” Jalnig Nuk stated. “Finding love for one in my position is difficult. So many desire the power of the throne yet cannot realize the responsibility that comes with it.”
“Responsibility is a heavy mantle and unfortunately, so often the one that wears it finds themselves alone,” Max replied. “I am fortunate to have this family before you who help me with it.”
Blue eyes sparkled as Jalnig Nuk nodded, slowly drinking the cup he held as he gazed upon the group of people a few steps below. Fowl and Batrire sat close, holding hands and smiling as Cordellia sat in the chair near Tanila’s.
“Tell me when you are ready and I can take you and your party to the portal that will allow you to exit this place.”
Max saw Tanila’s head whip around and sensed her heart rate spiking.
“You know where the portal is? And yet you challenged us like that? Almost killing–”
“It was a test.”
Those words silenced her as the gaze from the king carried a weight of power.
“You are the first in so long. To come here is not common at all. Stories abound about those who are deemed worthy to find our home. As my advisor mentioned, often they carry a unique stone to prove they are worthy of us. Since you did not carry them, you needed to prove yourself. I…”
Jalnig Nuk frowned, glancing at his cup for a moment before turning his gaze to Max.
“I should not have done what I did and I am grateful you somehow withstood that which I should have never attempted. As such, you have earned a reward.”
He nodded, and a servant came, holding out a tiny chest that would fit in the palm of Max’s hand.
“Take this. What is inside is for you and no one else. Those who come before you often carry a clear or blue gem. They face a different trial and are rewarded as such. You… you would have easily walked through that task and the rewards for it are minimal in comparison.”
Max slowly took the rainbow colored chest and flicked the tiny lid open, staring inside.
“It’s empty.”
Laughter echoed around the room and Jalnig Nuk shook his head.
“Put your finger inside. I promise it won’t bite it off.”
Max nodded and slowly slid his pointer finger into the opening.
Power flowed through it and suddenly the box began to form around his hand before running into his palm.
“Turn your hand over.”
Obeying, Max watched as the ball of rainbow hued goo shifted and moved and then started to take a shape. Size was added and soon a pair of chain metal pants that changed colors depending on the light rested in his palm.
“It appears you are needing those. May they serve you well as you attempt what is impossible.”
“Why is it impossible?”
Jalnig Nuk chuckled and set his cup down, leaning forward toward the party.

“The system makes climbing the tower hard. Few make it. When the moment comes, you’ll understand. Now tell me, does that gift work?”
Max wanted to ask more questions, but the pants in his hand called out to him.
[*Inspect Pants*]
*****
Merfolk King’s Gift
+75 Strength, Constitution, Agility, Intelligence, Wisdom
Merfolk Blessing - Breath, Move and attack as if on dry land.
Bonded
*****
Grinning, Max stood up, quickly storing them and then having them appear.
Fowl whistled at how they shimmered as he moved.
“I’ll gladly take them!”

49 Chapter 267 - The Question Everyone Has

https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-5-stubs-1030/chapter/1866131/chapter-267-the-question-everyone-has 2024-10-25

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Thousand-Tongue Mage (A Voice Magic LitRPG)
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/96474/thousand-tongue-mage-a-voice-magic-litrpg

A thousand spells at the tip of your tongue.

Zora Fabre, a language arts teacher at a small castle academy, speaks every tongue in the world. His only goal in life is to protect his students from the human-insect wars outside the academy, but when the magic dome is broken and a small army of giant insects flood in one night, he is forced to accept a system—and a rare mage class that allows him to manifest his words into reality.

Armed with his new ability, a spell-slinging wand, and his extensive knowledge of languages, Zora must accumulate power and defend his students from the invading bugs. If he can’t, they’ll devour everyone standing in their way, and the more voices they steal, the stronger they’ll get.

But if there's one language he'll admit he doesn't know how to speak, it's the language of the bugs—and he'll curse them with it a thousand times before he lets his academy fall.

Daily uploads until Volume One is complete!

Chapter 267 - The Question Everyone Has

“How did you survive?”
Everyone sat there quietly as Cordellia finally asked the question that had been eating at her since the moment she saw Max standing amidst the carnage of King Jalnig Nuk’s attack. For a single moment, she felt the tower climb had ended and if they managed to escape, what hope was there for her?
Even Tanila had the crystal in her hand, struggling not to break it. Hope was somehow still in those eyes of hers as tears had run down for a moment. Some from sadness, others from joy.
Tanila was about to talk, and Max squeezed her knee and shook his head.
“Can you wait till we are in our room?”
“To tell me everything?”
Max nodded.
Slowly, she nodded her head before turning her attention out the window of the carriage.
***
Cordellia winced as she used the binding tablet Max had acquired from Everett. He didn’t want to use it, but part of him felt it was still too soon, while the other part of him knew time had run out.
“I have a skill that allows me to sometimes take the skills of those that I kill.”
Frowning and then grinning, Cordellia chuckled before rolling her eyes.
“Yeah, those don’t exist. Now tell me.”
Max said nothing and nodded once, pointing at the others.
Slowly Cordellia saw that each of them were nodding at her.
“Seriously? A skill that allows that?! For something like that,t it would have to be a red skill or a–”
Her eyes widened and words froze in her throat. Turning slowly back at Max, she unconsciously pressed herself deeper into the cushioned chair.
“A black skill,” Max said. “I have a black skill.”
Once more, she glanced at the others and saw they all were in agreement.
“How? Why? How can you… why are all of you not worried?! Shouldn’t he be dead?! Killed by the…”
Cordellia’s own words registered, and she grimaced, wincing as she looked at Max, who sighed.
“I should be dead. I would be dead if those in charge had their way. Everything you know about a black skill tells you I’m the greatest threat to this world.”
He leaned forward and smiled softly.
“Tell me Cordellia. Do you believe I would hurt you?”
Her mouth moved and yet nothing came out. Twice and then three times she tried to speak, unable to say a word. Finally, she huffed and shook her head.
“No… you’re nothing like the stories we have been told. In fact… I know you would die for me.”
Max watched as a pair of tears escaped her eyes and then a few more fell. A second later, he had a small handkerchief in his hand and gave it to her.
“But… how… I mean, how are you not what we have been told?”
Tanila stood up and moved to where Max was and grabbed his hand, squeezing it and turned toward her Elven friend.
“Because Seth…” she paused and shook her head. “Max. Max Hoste is his real name. The name he had to hide because there were those still searching for him. But for now, we will continue to use the name Seth.”

Clearing her throat, Tanila ran a finger along Max's cheek.
"Seth is the kindest, gentlest, and bravest person I know. It doesn't matter that he is human and that I am an elf. He doesn't care who someone loves. All he cares about is protecting those who are weaker and those he calls friends or family."
A hint of red filled his cheeks and Max grabbed her hand, kissing the finger she had been touching him with.
"Gods can we stop with all the mushy stuff?" Fowl muttered. "Tanila is right, though. He's not like what I was told humans were. Even more importantly, he has risked his life multiple times for myself and the dwarf I love. If you think for a moment he is like the nightmares we have been told about someone with a black skill, then you need a few kicks to the head."
Batrire chuckled and nodded her head before she spoke.
"It was hard on all of us when he told us. It took some, who shall remain nameless, even though they have red hair at the moment, way too long to see the truth of the man she claims to love."
Sighing, Tanila nodded.
"She's right. I allowed my fears, like the ones you are facing, to hold me back. When I finally admitted to myself that he was nothing like I had heard… nothing like my… my father or those I know who will do whatever it takes to grow stronger, I surrendered to how I felt."
Cordellia nodded.
"Does this mean I can know what all you are able to do finally?"
"I can share most of it, but even I need a few secrets."
She nodded and grinned.
"I'm all ears!"
"Gods I hate Elven jokes," Fowl grumbled.
***
Everett stared in disbelief at Max as he heard what they had faced.
"A tower floor twenty above what you should face… that seems awful, and yet you managed to defeat it."
"Which makes me wonder what might be there after the fiftieth floor," Max replied.
A sigh came from their leader, who gave up trying to hide his concerns anymore.
"You do understand that the things you face and will face are most likely never going to be seen again for some time to come? The information you keep sharing and the notes you provide on stats of the monsters help Tom and I prepare all the future climbers, but at some point surely you have to notice there is a bump in their strength every ten floors."
Thumping the desk, Max's face squirmed at the truth of something he had missed.
"You're right and I totally missed that!" he exclaimed. "I was trying to figure out what I was missing, but now it makes sense."
The journal was in his hands, open, and he was scanning the numbers he had written down.
"What would I ever do without you, Everett?" he asked, not bothering to look up.
It finally made sense and now, with that piece missing, he could start projecting some of the potential numbers he might grow to in the next ten floors.
"Do I want to know?"
"I'm not one hundred percent certain and I won't know till we actually reach the forty-first floor but I'm guessing we should be facing monsters and creatures with over four hundred in some of their stats."
Pulling his notebook out, Everett flipped a few pages and frowned, using a pencil and erasing a few things before writing down what Max had said.
"That might make sense, but only if you're not facing what others do because the tower floor is giving you harder stuff."
Sighing, Max scribbled down some more notes and then shut his book.
"Only time will tell. For now, I need to turn in. For the next two days, I'm going to craft everything I can for you, including armor if you want it."
"And Tanila?"

“She has some errands to run, but the third day is hers.”
“Sleep well then. I’ll have a list for you in the morning.”
***
Two days passed as Max crafted a dozen unique items, all lower grades for Everett to use as rewards for those who achieved goals he had begun to lay out. Max even spent a few hours outside with Tom, showing some techniques with the new recruits and wondering if Dexic felt like some dish to show off every time Tom mentioned his name.
All that was left was tonight, and he smiled as the carriage door opened.
“You look amazing as always,” he stated, getting out and waiting for her to step out.
The yellow dress she wore matched the current blond hair she had, both of them having disguised themselves for a night out.
“As do you,” she replied with a wink. “Hair, even if it's black, suits you.”
Feigning shock, Max shrugged.
“One day I’ll grow it for you, just not yet.”
Slipping her arm through his, they moved into the restaurant she had picked out, ready for a meal between the two of them.
***
“Some of us need a real date,” Batrire muttered as she elbowed Fowl. “Just how amazing was the food?”
Smiling, Tanila pulled out a box and handed it to her.
“I saved you a few bites. The quail was perfectly cooked and seasoned how I like it. They had fresh sushi because someone apparently brought in some rare fish recently that hit the market.”
Max smiled as the two chatted about the food from last night and gave Cordellia a playful poke.
“You okay?”
She nodded and smiled.
“I finally feel like I understand and it makes sense now why they trust you so much. I… I spent the last few days thinking about everything I have been told and looking back I see how so much of it was jaded and not based on what I’ve actually experienced. It makes me wonder why we live like this.”
“It’s easier to operate under fear and beliefs than to put ourselves out there and trust others. I know. A moment came when I could have never trusted anyone again, but doing so would have meant I missed out on them and you.”
“He really means missed out on me,” Fowl stated as he pointed at the portal. “We’re up, talk later.”
***
“What in the gods is this mess? Ships?”
Max stood at the dock with the others, watching as one ship was barely visible on the far right and another one was coming in near land.
“No one’s captaining them,” Cordellia said as she peered under her hands. “It appears they are sailing themselves.”
“So we just board one and see where it goes?”
Max shrugged.
“Maybe we wait and see if another comes after this one? Though it might be only a few hours or a few days.”
Batrire shrugged at Max’s response.
“You’re the captain, Captain.”
Rolling his eyes, he shook his head and pointed at the incoming vessel.
“I guess we climb aboard then mateys and see if there be any booty!”
Groans came from all four as his pirate accent failed to impress.
***
After arriving at the dock, the ship sat there for ten minutes before the sails started to flutter and the ship took off.
It wasn’t a large ship with a single mast and sail but on both sides were three cannons, each with a string on them.

Fowl had pulled one multiple times, finding that it didn’t fire anything and no cannons or powder were nearby to stuff in them.
“Decorations?”
“Maybe, but right now, I’m more interested in knowing where we are headed. Look over there and you can see another ship coming into the dock. If this is right, something is making them move like this. Finding out is going to be fun I guess.”
Cordellia moved to where Max and Fowl were at and pointed up at the top of the mast.
“There’s a spot up there I could stand and try to look from if you want. Tell me what you’re thinking.”
“If you’re willing to keep a lookout for now, I can swap off with you later.”
Giving a salute, Cordellia laughed and jogged to the mast, grabbing the knotted rope and pulling herself easily up it.
“She’s changed a lot in a few days,” Fowl muttered. “Like a whole different elf… even if her voice is still so high.”
“Being honest with her was important,” Max replied. “I hated having to bind her like that but I’m still not ready to trust that secret with everyone. Once it comes out we both know life is going to get dangerous.”
“For us, not for you,” Fowl muttered as he yanked on the string again.
BOOM!
The cannon jumped back slightly and a cannon ball flew across the open water, splashing into the sea.
Everyone turned to look at Fowl whose face had gone red, hand just a foot from the string had pulled.
“Fowl Hammerfall!”
Max started to laugh as Batrire stomped toward the dwarf who took off running toward the front of the ship.
Oh the adventures on the seas… two dwarves, two elves, and a crazy man.

50 Chapter 268 - Who Wants to be a Pirate https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-5-stubs-1030/chapter/1867663/chapter-268-who-wants-to-be-a-pirate 2024-10-28

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

Apocalypse Healer - Path of Death [Progression LitRPG]
https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/96526/apocalypse-healer-path-of-death-progression-litrpg

The apocalypse changed the world as they knew it. The dead have become the Infected and creatures from fairy tales now roam the lands Death and chaos reign supreme, consuming every corner of the Earthen Union.

Danger lurks around every corner, yet David remains unfazed. On the contrary, he was delighted.

Even when the circumstances forced him to make difficult decisions, David never faltered. His heart beat wildly like a war drum, and amid the destruction, he feels an odd sense of belonging.

But why does he feel at home in a world where everyone else was drowning in despair?

**

-Release Schedule – 5x/week

-Healer, who pursues the path of combat.

- Battle Maniac, but not a mindless killer.

–Slow Start

-No harem.

Chapter 268 - Who Wants to be a Pirate

“Two more port side!”
Max cursed under his breath as Cordellia called out more of these misshapen creatures climbed up the sides of the ship.

His halberd cut through a barnacle covered man that originally had a massive crab claw, now lying four feet away after having hacked it off. Dozens of bodies of fallen attackers littered the deck, coating it in slime and blood.
“I’ve got those two!” Fowl shouted as he held the stairs where Tanila and Batrire stood behind him, spells raining down non stop.
Notifications of stat increases had stopped, but he still had hoped one might give him a few more points.
Strength and Constitution are now at three hundred and seven…
Each point was amplified by the growing level of tower experience and his new boots, creating a curve which made it unfair against these men and women that appeared to have been fused with sea creatures.
Leaping over a pair of tentacles that still twitched on the wooden planks, Max brought his hammer side down, smashing through an armored shell a half crab, half women attempting to block his attack.
She became another stain on the deck as so many had, unable to stand against the increase in power he now possessed.
“Another dozen are swimming this way!”
Arrows came from above, as their ranger called out the wave of invaders that seemed to have no end in sight.
“The experience is amazing!” Fowl yelled out as his weapon brained a creature with a face like a shrimp. “Worst part is I’m getting hungry for seafood!”
Still grinning, Max couldn’t help but appreciate the dungeon serving up experience so nicely. Any other party would be struggling under the constant arrival, but most of their attackers barely made it ten feet onto the deck before finding themselves missing a limb or dead.
***
Collecting the orange gems took a while as over three hundred invaders that had attempted to storm the ship vanished. Splotches of blood and other discolored stains were still on the wooden planks, as well as a very fishy smell, but the system removed the rest.
“Almost two hours straight,” Fowl stated as he sat on his chair he now brought with him everywhere. “Tell me I’m not the only one who enjoyed that.”
Chuckles and nods came as they chewed their food and drank water, enjoying the small reprieve for the last ten minutes.
“You want to trade spots?” Max shouted up at Cordellia.
“No! I like being up here, safe from all that down there!”
“Smart elf,” Batrire said as she wiped her hands off on her robes. “Healing is a lot easier with you two both healing yourself. Tell me, Seth, how strong are you now?”
Fowl’s eyes lit up at the sharing of stats, leaning forward toward his bald friend.
“I’m over three hundred now.”
Coughing, Fowl’s eyes watered as he pulled his flask out and took another drink.
“Natural?! That means you have a boon!”
Nodding, Max shrugged.
“I’ve had it for a while, but didn’t want to seem like I was flaunting it. It increases my damage and makes me hit like I’m a taller tier creature.”
Whistling, Fowl shook his head.
“That’s why you’re smashing these poor sea creatures like you are.”
“They're stronger too, though. Their strength is three hundred, as is their constitution.”
“So that would explain why–” Fowl stopped himself, eyes widening as he gasped.
“You have a three hundred constitution also?!”
Sighing, Max grinned.
“Gods it's not fair! Ockrim! Love on me, please!”
Batrire kicked her lover's chair and shook her head.
“He gave you me. That should be enough.”
Fowl winced but said nothing in response, frowning for a moment.

“Let’s worry about stats later,” Tanila said. “For now, we need to just stay ready for whatever comes next.”
***
The sounds of explosions were muffled across the water.
Six hours of consistent fighting followed and as the sun began to dip toward the edge of the waters, a large fortress appeared on an island at the edge of the waters.
Everyone tried to see what was taking place as it finally came into view.
An island that had to be about three miles long and maybe a mile wide had a massive fortress with forty plus foot walls all around it.
Cannons were firing from everywhere on top of the walls.
Burning ships were sinking near the shore where it appeared they tried to dock. Near the shore was a small town.
“Do we really need to fight that?”
No one had an answer for their healer's question as they watched dozens of cannonballs rain down from the walls, crashing into a ship that was already sinking.
“Look! I see more of those sea raider people we fight!”
Cordellia’s eyes and spot on the top of the ship allowed her to first see what they couldn’t.
“A fortress ran by those things… Maybe we do need to siege the fortress,” Max said as he turned toward the cannons. “Quick, everyone to a cannon! We need to see how fast they can fire!”
Max moved to the port side, which was away from the fort, while the other three stood on the aft side.
“Pull the rope and see how long it takes before it will fire again!”
Each of them gave their cannon’s rope a tug and four distinct booms echoed across the deck.
Counting in his head it took fifteen seconds before each of theirs fired again.
Like clockwork, for ten shots, it had a fifteen second timer between uses.
Bending down, Max wrapped his arms around his cannon and lifted it up.
It creaked for a moment, and then chunks of wood came with it.
Storing it he moved to the other side and hacked off a section of the ship, setting the cannon back down where he had created a firing spot for it.
The cannon started to meld back into the deck, the torn planks joining the others and soon it looked like it belonged there except for the misshapen firing hole.
“That’s some smart thinking,” Tanila said. “Definitely a warrior with a few points in intelligence.”
Nodding, he ran back over and ripped up the other two, keeping them stored for now.
“Cordellia! Come down for now! I’m pretty sure this next part will be better if you’re here to help!”
With everyone gathered, they started working on aiming the cannons as much as possible and finding out the distance a cannonball would travel.
“What if you put one up near the front of the ship on the aft side, or maybe even two?”
“To help attack early as we come near the island?”
Cordellia nodded, glad to know Max saw her point.
“Exactly. With the way the cannons appear fixed, it would allow us a chance to maybe hit a few different targets. These things have between a half mile and mile range, depending on their angle. The front of the ship will increase with its angle of the deck.”
Giving their ranger a slap on the back, Max jogged to the front of the ship with her in tow.
“Here and here?”
She nodded, marking the spots with a dagger in the wood.
“This angle would be best and this position would give a few different shooting lanes.”

Hacking off more of the side of the ship, Max created openings she had recommended and set the two cannons down, still amazed at how they rejoined the ship.
“I guess we should practice a little more before we get there.”
Both of them were laughing, acting like kids with a new toy as cannonballs soared over the water before splashing a mile away.
***
Night fell as the first few shots of five newly placed cannon’s rang out in the darkness.
A half moon shimmered across the sea, providing an eerie glow on the dark waters.
Torches and other lights appeared all over the fort and the city within the bay.
The ones that had magically lit up on their ship were immediately snuffed out by Tanila as they snuck across the darkness, hoping to gain any advantage possible during this new test of the tower.
Cracks rang out and bells sounded from the fort as their first few shots missed, but all of them made quick adjustments as Cordellia called out what they needed to fix.
Max couldn’t help but smile as their Elven ranger moved between them, helping adjust, succeeding in her element.
Cannon balls began to strike some of the fortifications, bodies being flung from the ramparts as their weapons exploded from the assault.
“Careful when we get close! It appears these might do the same if destroyed!”
Max already planned on relocating some of the cannons the closer they got but for now, they had a better angle and each shot sent a wave of destruction.
“Fire group A!”
Batrire and Tanila both pulled their ropes, sending two projectiles at the spot they were aimed at. Four seconds passed.
“Fire group B!”
Max and Fowl pulled their rope, sending two more at the next target.
A few seconds later Cordellia pulled on hers, adjusting to help against the targets just fired upon.
Every five seconds, the boom of cannons went off, walking a line of damage along the fort.
***
“Keep the time! Be ready to move!”
They were in the bay and the fires of the previous sinking ship along with the burning town at the port, illuminated their approach.
All five cannons were now facing the front, chaos taking place on the land where packs of sea raiders ran around, seemingly unable to defend against the current raining of cannonballs.
Every three seconds, a metal ball of death raced toward the fortress, now aimed at the giant set of metal doors that protected the entrance of the keep.
Huge dents and bent areas were present, but the five continued to fire, knowing that soon the time to jump off the ship and get to land would come.
Another grinding of their hull against a sunken ship sounded out as the boat shifted slightly before regaining its course.
Booms came from the fortress and cannonballs whizzed over the ship, some striking air walls that Max and Tanila summoned, a few others taking chunks off the ice walls they had attached to the front of the ship.
“Half a mile tops! We’re going to be moving soon! Be ready Seth!”
Already the ship was starting to turn slightly, aimed at the wooden dock that in all this fighting seemed invulnerable to any damage.
Ripping the two port cannons off, he moved them to the aft side, angling them for shots before returning to the front with Fowl and Cordellia.
“Like shooting pirates in a… something,” Fowl said, realizing his joke never materialized as he had hoped.
***
“Off the ship! Now!”

Flaming casks continued to fly toward their position from behind the fortress walls, lobbed over like someone was using a siege weapon.
Both of their air walls had stopped a pair but time was up and the docks were only a hundred yards away.
Yanking up two of the cannons, Max stored them, unable to save the third which was burning and would soon explode like the first one had.
“Jump and swim!”
Max grabbed Tanila and Batrire as Cordellia and Fowl jumped into the water.
His leap got them much closer to shore and the trio found themselves in water only slightly over their head.
Tiny fish began to race toward them, each only about two feet long, yet spinning teeth were at the tip of their body, attempting to cut flesh as they bored into someone.
Max swatted at them with his hands, unable to use his weapon while the other two were close.
Both women came up from the water, yelping and swimming frantically as more came when blood appeared, turning the water into a mess of silver shapes.
His sonar told Max there had to be over a hundred with at least twice that coming towards them.
Fowl was struggling to swim, but his plate armor seemed to be stopping the swarm from injuring him.
“Go!” Max shouted as he channeled lightning, knowing that what he was about to do was stupid.
Man I hope Tom wasn’t right...
Trying to guess how much power he needed and what kind of damage it might do, Max unleashed a short build up into the area around him, feeling the lightning spell jolting himself and everything else in the water.
Tanila and Batrire were fine, unaffected but his hand went numb from where the lighting had erupted out of.
Around him, the fish in a thirty-foot circle stopped moving. Apparently stunned for a second as the lightning traveled out from him.
Grinning and knowing he was going to be even dumber, Max got his feet set and began to cast ball lightning.
“Keep running, I got this!”

51 Chapter 269 - Claiming a Fortress

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Chapter 269 - Claiming a Fortress

Max took a few seconds to recover as Fowl and Cordellia dealt with the pack of three that rushed them upon exiting the water.
Hundreds of fish were floating upside down, their silver bodies turned orange in the glowing light of fires.
“You are an idiot!” Tanila shouted at Max. “Tom told you not to cast lightning in the water! That could kill you.”
“I am fine. Numb but fine. It’s already wearing off and I can feel my magic starting to work right again,” Max replied. “My choice was to let them get eaten alive or save them.”
She gave him an angry glare before turning to face the others.
Tanila was right and he knew it. The power he had put into that spell had gone out for over a hundred yards and while it killed hundreds outright, it had stunned

probably another three hundred past the kill zone. His mind had hurt and the pain inside him was different than a typical spell. It was as if his own magic had damaged something inside and even with Regeneration it was taking a moment for whatever backlash had happened to dissipate.
“I guess we need to storm the fortress?” Fowl asked as he pointed at the twenty-five foot tall doors they had dislodged from the stone walls.
“It would appear so,” Cordellia replied as she pointed at the sea raiders that were exiting from the new opening.
“Let’s get to it then,” Max said as he pulled out his weapon, ready to see what lay beyond.
***
“Four more!”
Max swung his halberd, cleaving his current foe in half while seeing the group coming down toward the party.
At least fifty corpses were behind them from the entrance they had squeezed through. Inside the fort were tents and a few siege weapons that no longer fired thanks to Tanila and her spells. The barrels that had been near them provided enough light as the wooden remains of those tall trebuchets burned like a bonfire.
Arrows flew past him and Max moved to finish off the last one bothering Fowl, freeing them up to move to intercept the newest additions.
“We need to get to that building, I think!” Tanila yelled as she sent an earth spear at one of the four, gutting it like a fish.
Max nodded, seeing the three story building that was about a quarter of a mile away, encircled by tents and packs of these defenders. All they needed was time and slowly they could find out if the portal or a boss was there.
***
The building had been empty, nothing but furniture and some bottles of alcohol Fowl had taken.
Each minute brought more defenders and Max tried to figure out where the portal out of the tower floor could be.
“What are we missing? Why haven’t we found it?”
Tanila paused, spinning around, studying the fortress area she could see in the darkness.
All around on top of the walls near fire pits was a flag, waving in the wind with a mutated crab claw and a pair of tentacles.
Biting her lip, she turned and saw at the top of the building they had moved from that same flag only about four times larger, moving slightly in the wind.
She began to cast a stone spear and after it reached the size she wanted, sent it at the flagpole, striking it and toppling the flag.
The moment it vanished from their view, the whole fortress shuddered, and a roar rang out.
Back near the front of the building, a massive claw swiped at it, knocking the stone structure to the side about fifteen feet up.
“Holy goblin shite!” Fowl cursed.
“That thing is super ugly,” Cordellia added.
Standing near the building was a twenty-five foot tall half octopus, half crab, one hundred percent ugly sea raider. It wore a captain's hat on its crab head as two eye stalks darted around the shattered building, looking for something.
Its right arm was a crab arm, with a claw at least eight feet long, dripping with liquid. The other arm was a wiggling mass of tentacles that seemed to stretch and retract, never holding still.
It moved around the remains of the building, one leg looking like a normal human leg, the other a metallic peg leg from the knee down.
“Foolish elf! You dare challenge me?!”
As it shouted, it pointed the wiggling mass of tentacles at Tanila.
They moved suddenly and a burst of light came before the sound of an explosion rang out.

[Protect Ally]
Max found himself ten yards from where he had been, near the extent of the range of the ability, shield out and before the woman he loved.
Only his speed and mind allowed him to activate that skill as a cannonball the size of a dwarf came from a hidden cannon underneath the mass of tentacles.
Max tried to figure out where he was. His mind hurt and his body ached. Both arms were broken as he had been summoned by the skill to protect Tanila.
Thirty yards away he was lying on his back, still holding onto his shield.
[Regeneration]
For that to have done that much damage…
A little over a third of his life was gone, and he had successfully blocked the attack, with the bonus to defenses the skill had provided.
Storing his shield and climbing to his feet without the use of his arms or hands yet, Max saw that Fowl was charging the boss as Tanila summoned the largest ball of lightning he had ever seen.
A wave of healing came and his arms immediately were renewed, his life well above ninety percent now as Batrire never turned around, her eyes locked on Fowl.
Squeezing his fists, Max felt his knuckles pop.
Immediately, he was next to the boss, his weapon already moving to attack.
The blade cut at the joint of the peg leg, causing the boss to stumble a little, sending its claw that had been aimed at Fowl to the side of his friend, slamming into the dirt.
Vibrations of metal on metal reverberated through his weapon's shaft, and when the blade came back, only a slight amount of blood came from the injury that looked like just a scratch.
Five tentacles raced toward him and Max dodged backwards, slashing and hacking at them, chopping off two of them, sections falling to the ground and still wiggling.
The boss roared, spinning on its pegleg and pointing the tentacle-covered cannon at him.
Moving quickly, Max turned its back to his friends, drawing its attention and the cannon that still hadn’t fired.
The boss spasmed, its arm lifting slightly, and the cannon boomed, its massive payload shooting out from the opening and blowing a hole in the fortress's wall as it struck.
Tanila’s lightning spell had landed and gave him a moment to attack.
Running forward again, his choices were hard.
So many bosses have had a damage mitigation spell or a way to heal. If I can’t kill it in one shot, then all my abilities will be used and then we have to try to wear it down.
Points on the boss’s body called out. Take out the peg leg and the boss would be weakened and slowed. It might be able to handle a normal strike, but what about his combo of three skills?
The arm was another option, but it was so thick that even with the cleaving bonus, could he hack the arm with the cannon off?
Going for the head seemed great, but the shell looked much thicker than so many of the things they had faced recently and if he couldn’t kill it and the boss had regeneration, then what?
“Run Fowl!”
The idea felt stupid and smart at the same time.
A barrel of magical fire was making its way toward the boss’s face.
He was now under it with his weapon swinging, ready to test a few things.
[Power Strike]
[Magical Strike]
[Rampage]
That same spot he had hit this time didn’t resist the cut of his blade.
One moment, the metal leg that ran into the creature's thigh was connected and the next it was separated.
Two more attacks were used on the other leg, carving off large chunks of flesh and striking bone each time, cutting tendons and causing the boss to stumble.

As he ran from underneath it, moving faster than most eyes could keep up, he snagged the metal leg, storing it and, hopefully, keeping any possible healing skill from working.
Fire erupted above and behind him and a glance over his shoulder revealed the boss had used its left arm to block the barrel, those tentacles cracking open the wood and a spark that seemed to wait between the moist, wet flesh ignited the liquid.
Another explosion came as the fire covered the arm, setting off whatever mechanism or device caused its cannon to work.
Two shots rapidly came out, arching up into the night sky, both flaming with the liquid they shot through before the entire arm vanished in a massive ball of fire.
One moment it was there, thrashing around, writing and the next shrapnel and gooey, flaming tentacle bits were flung across the inside of the fortress.
Roars of pain came from the boss as the stump above its elbow was seared shut, waving around in the air as flames burnt part of its chest and head, sent there from the demise of its own secret weapon.
Trying to cast lighting still felt impossible, so Max summoned his fire elemental, letting it appear before he summoned a fireball.
Not hindered by a foolish decision like his, Tanila had a lightning cloud forming above the boss, still seconds away from being finished.
An eyestalk vanished into a fine mist as Cordellia managed to hit one with an empowered arrow.
“You all shall die!”
The boss’s shout reverberated off the wall as it turned and faced Tanila and the others.
Even on fire, somehow able to still stand on a badly damaged leg, Max watched as its midsection, which was covered in a slimy, algae like leather chest piece, began to open.
Tentacles from around it came down, providing support as the boss faced the four others.
Max ran around, trying to figure out what was coming, and saw that inside its stomach and chest area were at least a dozen more tentacles, all thicker than its arm had originally had. As they moved, six canons of different sizes began to push from its midsection, aimed at the party.
“DIE!”
The fortress was filled with sounds of cannons much larger than the ones on their ship rapidly deploying shots.
Smoke filled the space before the boss as extra tentacles came down, bracing it as the barrage of cannonballs rained down upon his friends.
Max saw the shimmer of Batrire’s dome, not knowing how much damage it could sustain as everyone tried to gather under it for safety.
Running with everything he had, Max had his shield out, angling to where Fowl was standing, both shields out as he stood before the trio of women.
Air walls shattered in an instant, stone walls were like paper against the assault, and cracks began to appear in Batrire’s dome.
She was sweating, Max saw, something different from any other time she had used it.
“Be ready!” Max shouted over the din as he came to stand beside Fowl.
Dwarf size and human sized cannonballs bounced off the dome as each one destroyed more of the magical protective barrier and after ten seconds, both he and Fowl used their skills.
[Armored Warrior]
[Bulwark]
The shield shattered and the barrage of attacks began to strike them.
Fowl cried out in pain and Max felt the same thing as he let Regeneration do what it could.
His life decreased slower, ten percent per blocked shot while Fowl suffered more damage, but he received heals, keeping him up as the boss’s roar changed from rage to agony.

Thorn aura!
Each shot Fowl blocked was dealing large amounts of damage back to the boss, and after six more seconds, the last cannon ball came, striking the dwarven warrior’s shield.
A crashing sound from where the boss was, followed by laborious breathing, was heard.
Smoke filled the air, but Max could see with Sonar what had happened.
Chunks of the boss’s body were on the ground, tentacles were writhing, separated from its midsection.
Seconds ticked by as normal sound returned, the echoes of the cannons no longer ringing in everyone's ears.
“Holy… elf… tits,” Fowl managed to say through the pain that Batrire was trying to help heal him from. “The experience… it’s dead.”
Max could sense that Fowl was right. It had killed itself by attacking Fowl.

52 Chapter 270 - Leading The Next Generation

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Chapter 270 - Leading The Next Generation

“Sorry I took the kill,” Fowl groaned as he stored both shields, finding himself suddenly wrapped up in a pair of dwarven arms as he apologized to Max.
“You saved me!”
Kisses came and soon Max felt his stomach roll from the grunting between the two dwarves.
“He really did kill it,” Tanila said as she pointed at the boss’s corpse.
With their minds working right, Max cursed and dashed forward, grabbing stray bits of flesh and metal, storing them as the body began to vanish.
“Sorry!” Fowl called out for a moment before turning back to the hungry lips of their healer.
Chuckling, Max ignored the fact they had missed out on a few more pieces of the boss but was grateful that Tanila had reminded him of it.
A chest appeared near the broken building and Max whistled loudly.
“You want to keep kissing or open this chest?”
One moment their dwarven tank was lip locked and the next he had left his woman standing there, lips still pursed as he raced toward the chest Max had pointed out.
“Fowl Hammerfall!”
Ignoring their healer's shout, the dwarf came to a stop at the chest, admiring it as Max came to stand next to him.
“Nice work back there. I guess you can finally say that you’re strong enough to kill a boss.”
Fowl snorted and waved off Max’s compliment, looking at the copper colored chest and the etching it had. Outside, what had to clearly be a replica of the fortress was the boss, the tentacle arm held upward with a cannon showing.
“Seems a bit smaller than I’d like, but let’s see what’s inside.”
Flicking the lid open, the dwarf peered in.
“Well, Cordellia’s going to be happy,” he stated. “I guess the rest of us will make do.”
Max looked inside as the others came toward them.
A bow waited for their ranger, and Max was going to get a new ring for himself. A copper colored robe was for Tanila and Batrire appeared to have earrings waiting for her. Fowl had a necklace, which Max thought seemed off. Three large orange crystals also waited for them all.

“Go ahead,” Max whispered as the others arrived.
Laughing, Fowl reached in and took the necklace out, studying it as the copper necklace twisted in his hand.
“Impossible… it’s better than my other one…” Fowl put it on and grinned. “I get fifteen percent more reflective damage.”
“Wow… on top of your skill and shield or?”
Fowl shrugged, never letting the smile leave his face.
“I guess we’ll have to test it out back at the Faction house.”
Cordellia reached in, pulling out the bow.
“Forgive me for pulling a Fowl,” she said as she studied the metal bow. It had a bronze color and even a metal string.
“Holy mother of dwarven sacks! Twenty-five percent more damage!”
Fowl gave the ranger a slap on her back.
“Welcome to team damage!”
“You two go ahead,” Max said, and both Tanila and Batrire reached in, removing their items.
Each of them stood there, marveling at the new loot.
Tanila’s robe changed and its place was a bronze colored robe that shimmered slightly. It was a little tighter than her previous one, and Max couldn’t help but wink as he stared at her.
“Mana regen, ten percent,” she stated.
“Ten percent better heals,” Batrire chimed in.
Max reached in and pulled out his ring, wondering what fortune he might find.
[*Inspect Ring*]
*****
Tentacle Ring
+40 Strength, Constitution, Dexterity
Bonded
*****
“Huh… I got screwed… nothing but stats.”
Everyone looked at him, their eyebrows cocked and shaking their heads.
“No really, what did you get?” Fowl asked.
Snorting, Max rolled his eyes.
“Seriously, only forty to Strength, Constitution, and Dexterity.”
“Only he says,” Batrire scoffed.
“Well, perhaps Ockrim does love me more,” Fowl muttered.
Taking the crystals and storing them, Max pointed at the portal that shimmered in the moonlit night.
“Time to head home and recover for a few days. We need to probably let Tom work with us before we face the boss.”
A few groans came as the group turned and moved toward the portal.
Working with Tom was never fun.
***
“Focus on your targets!*
Max stopped talking with a few of the newer recruits as he waited for his turn again, watching Tom berate Cordellia and Tanila.
Both were not excited that the man had added multiple rings for them to send spells and arrows through. Each of them had improved since the first few hours but the moment they did, he swapped out the rings for smaller ones, making them have to focus even more.
Cordellia yelped in pain as Tom shot her with a padded arrow.
“Dodge and shoot! Dip, dive, duck and dodge!”
Without responding, she bobbed and weaved as Everett occasionally sent an arrow at her.
Tanila’s air wall stopped the one he sent in her direction as she fired off a smaller stone spear at her target.
“Good!” he called out, clapping his hands.

A few near him joined in with some applause, causing Tom to look at Max and grin.
“I don’t like it when he smiles like that,” Max said as he winked at a warrior near him. “Just know every time you get a chance to train with him, take it. Tom has probably forgotten more about combat than most of us will ever learn.”
“Even you?” a dwarven warrior asked from the group.
Nodding, Max pointed at the trainer who was making his way toward them.
“Every time we practice, I learn something. Just being strong or fast isn’t enough. You need to have solid tactics and skill knowledge. It’s like having the sword skill and fighting someone with an axe skill. Both use different forms of fighting and while part of it is the same, you can study and learn about those movements and combinations.”
“Seth is right,” Tom declared as he got within hearing distance. “Too many people depend upon their skills and don’t use their minds. Even a warrior with limited intelligence points is technically smarter than the average person.”
A few chuckles and some pokes came from the crowd.
“You see both Tanila and Cordellia working on minor tricks and techniques. Casting a spell doesn’t change, but how you cast, how much mana you put into that spell, where you aim it, and a few other tricks I can help teach are what make the best mages even better. Likewise, just shooting a bow isn’t hard, but doing it while being attacked and having to thread the needle to make the shot that matters is what can be the difference between life and death.”
“But what about someone like Mr. Pendal, who is already stronger than everyone else?!”
Both Tom and Max laughed at the old man in the back.
Everyone turned to see Everett had snuck up from behind, smiling at them.
Immediately, the group of adventurers stood taller and gave the man space.
“Relax, I’m here like all of you to watch how the training goes. I actually have a treat for you all and that is in about twenty minutes Dexic should arrive and you can watch those two spar for a bit. After that, both of them, as well as the rest of our famous party, will give each of you some pointers and work with you.”
Cheers rang out, and Max smiled.
When Everett had asked if they were willing, he was the first to sign up, signaling the doom for the rest of the group.
***
Picking up the training equipment, Max tossed the last items into the barrel and watched as Everett stored it in the training chest.
“I think that went well,” Max said as he looked at the marks across the dirt that had come from all the people moving across it. The sun was almost gone and everyone else had gone inside, ready to talk about what they learned while partaking in some of the food and drink Everett had promised.
“Better than you realize. Those three groups didn’t just learn tactics and tips today, they each got a chance to work with someone they idolize and worship.”
Max started to reply, but Everett held up his hand.
“No, they worship you in some ways. At least eighty percent of those who apply here do so because they believe they can be the next you. My job is to help them be smart, train hard, and see that rising to the top takes time and work. You showing them and telling them those things will keep them from being stupid, hopefully.”
“You being here meant a lot as well. It’s nice to know the Faction leader cares enough to occasionally rub elbows and be present.”
Nodding, Everett pointed at the doors.
“Speaking of rubbing elbows, we need to get inside and get some food and drink, or your dwarven friend may consume it all.”
Laughing, both men moved to join the party.
***
Max’s head felt the pulsing of the alarm, waking him up immediately.
Tanila groaned, rising up as he did.
“A dungeon break?”

“Sounds like that alarm,” she replied, slapping her cheeks a few times and standing up, dressed the moment her feet touched the floor.
Both of them raced out into their main room, finding everyone ready for battle.
“Bah, why tonight? My head is killing!”
Ignoring Fowl’s complaint, they all moved toward the door, rushing downstairs to find Everett and Tom in the main common area.
The Faction leader moved to where they were, letting Tom talk with the others.
“This is a bad break, four dungeons again. Similar to what you faced before, but the one we’re supposed to help with is undead this time.”
“We’re ready,” Max said as he motioned to the others.
Shaking his head, Everett held up a hand.
“I need them and Dexic to go to the south gate and help with a dungeon there. None of the main teams are back for the other Factions and we all know you should be able to handle this one alone.”
Glancing at the rest of his party, Max saw Tanila nod.
“Fine. I’ll head out.”
“You don’t want me to portal you?”
Shaking his head, Max moved and gave Tanila a kiss on the cheek, spotting Dexic who just entered the room.
“No, I can make it there faster and you can save on the power.”
Turning to Dexic, Max held out his hand as he left the party.
“Keep them safe.”
Her head jerked slightly as she saw the party invite and then at Everett, who nodded.
“I will.”
Nodding, Max moved to the door, and the moment they were open vanished.
Everett laughed and turned back to the group, his small amount of amusement now hidden behind a stern face.
“Let’s get you all moving.”
***
The city was a blur as he raced through the empty streets. With the alarms having gone off, no one was in the middle of the roads and Max only had to dodge one party that was running toward the gates.
Above him the half moon provided some light, but none of that mattered. His Sonar told him everything he needed to know.
Even it struggled to feed the information to his brain, as all he could do was react, speeding through the town, sending up a cloud of dust behind him.
A few shouts and cries had come, but they were gone, unable to be heard for even the briefest of seconds.
Open gates were ahead and the guards that stood there, preparing to shuttle citizens in tried to react to the gust of wind that blew by.
Ahead, the roads were packed with people trying to flee, so Max took a new route.
Jumping, he landed on a roof and began leaping from roof to roof, clearing streets and sometimes jumping over two or three buildings at a time.
For so long, he hadn’t really allowed himself to run free.
In moments the outer town was ending and the fields were ahead.
Without missing a beat, he was on the ground, racing along the dirt road and headed in the direction of the dungeon off in the woods.
The first undead appeared and as Max ran, two swords turned into the threshers blade, harvesting the heads of countless zombies and skeletons as he raced toward the portal.
He was gone, a shadow in the night, leaving headless corpses, taking a step and stumbling before falling to never rise again.
The portal appeared through the trees, sitting on a stone platform, and more undead fell as he ran to it, entering and slashing at those creatures inside.
The first floor was a long tunnel, packed to the edges with skeletons.
Laughing, his voice echoed off the stone walls, the dim torches that showed the shambling horde, taking his time as he cut down every single one of them.

It would have been easy to run through them, destroying the ones in his way, but something felt right about instead taking an extra few minutes and clearing the entire floor of them.
Ahead, the portal pulsed, twenty more skeletons coming through and before they had taken two steps, their bones began to fall apart as he stepped through to the second floor.
Now the reddish glow of fire that ran along the top of the worked stone walls filled a labyrinth-like dungeon. From every path more undead came and Max sighed at the knowledge that this would take too long to clear completely.
Instead, he pulled out his shield, held it before him and charged through the monsters, bashing into the wall and through it.
Three feet of stone seemed like a barrier most wouldn't imagine trying to break or push through, but Max continued to blaze ahead, smashing through each wall in less than a second.
After less than a minute, he stood before the final portal, watching it shimmer and pulse, a dark red color to it.
Pausing, he frowned.
Tanila had once said these were death, but that was so long ago... yet why another?
Unwilling to wait, Max ran toward the portal.
It was time to see what lay beyond.

53 Chapter 271 - What Lies Beyond A Red Portal

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Chapter 271 - What Lies Beyond A Red Portal

A graveyard half a mile in diameter, filled with corpses rising from the ground filled his vision when his eyes worked.
The same half moon, covered mostly by clouds, revealed in the center a creature he recognized immediately.
It was the appearance of the other two creatures with it that surprised him.
A vampire... a lich and...
He recognized the vampire from the one they had faced, which was a rabbit. This one was over twelve feet tall. Those red eyes told him everything he needed to know. The bone head, wrapped in black robes and the way the eye sockets burned with green magic, was the giveaway for the lich.
A shadow of some kind, that almost looked like fire, wisps of black rising from its arms that were raised upward to join the other two. Long black horns and blue eyes that were almost glowing like gems focused on whatever the trio was up to.
Three bosses, all strong and working together.
Pulling his weapon out, Max took a step forward and felt a wave of power hit him.
The one covered in shadows locked eyes with him.
As its body turned, the weird, shiny black surface of its body twisted, and it cocked its head.
With effort Max took a step, surprised that somehow he had been stopped for a moment.
The vampire screeched, pointing a finger, and a wave of red power shot toward him.
Without waiting, the lich turned, a bony finger sending a wave of green magic as well.
A wave of a much thicker beam of black came at him from the newest creature and Max held out his shield, allowing all three attacks to strike it.

On the other side, he felt like the magic they had attacked with was sickening. Enough to make one want to vomit. Like grease coating one's body, it felt slick and sick.
Even though they never penetrated his shield and no damage came, just the presence of all three was an overwhelming force of something dark. Something evil.
Had another person been there, they might have thought Max teleported or vanished, but instead he moved with every ounce of speed his body now possessed.
His weapon moved in a slash, taking off the head of the lich before adjusting his strike for the second attack, driving the tip of his halberd through the vampire's heart.
Both were too slow, unable to move or react, each dead as a second ticked by.
A notification popped up, but Max ignored it as the shadowed figure moved and attacked.
The clawed hand it had came in as a slash, faster than he had believed it might, and Max felt the claw almost brush his shoulder as he dodged.
[Consume has resisted a skill]
Even though it never touched him, it had an aura.
Slashing at it, the creature vanished, a poof of smoke where his blade cut through.
Another claw came from a shadow behind him, and Max's shield deflected it.
When the halberd swung, once again the creature was gone, smoke once more where it had struck from.
A dozen attacks came, all in a matter of seconds, and each one resulted in the stalemate of the game they played, blocking and striking, neither landing a blow.
Undead began to swarm toward him and Max started to cast Fire Nova, wanting to see if not only he could remove the incoming additional monsters but also if he could finally touch the monster he faced.
When his spell began to roll out, waves of flames washing over the dark ground, a soul wrenching howl came and Max watched as the creature appeared suddenly across the entire boss floor, pressed against the wall.
" *How?* "
The sound came from inside his head. Even from a hundred yards, it was as if he stood next to the shadowy figure.
All the undead that had attempted to attack were down, nothing more but ash.
"What are you?" Max asked.
" *I should ask the same... you should not be here!* "
As he talked, Max was casting Ice Prison, preparing for his assault.
"Neither should you!"
The distance between them was gone, and the creature tried to react. As its body began to vanish, ice formed in the middle of the shadow.
Max swung, aiming at the spot where two white crystals had appeared.
Something with substance connected with his blade, and a cry of pain filled his mind.
Turning, there on the other side of the boss floor again was the creature, holding its left arm, having been severed from his strike.
" *No! I was promised! I was–* "
Max's weapon passed through the smoke where the creature's neck had been.
A single cry of some kind raged against his mind once more, and then the presence vanished.
Gone was the aura of evil and the dungeon shook, a massive crack starting to form down the middle of the black dirt ground at the center of the dungeon floor.
It grew deeper and deeper, and then the chest that had spawned fell into a spot and vanished.
Once more, the dungeon shuddered and the ground closed.
Then a timer appeared above a portal.
What was that?
Max felt his skill trying to respond, yet nothing came.
Without waiting, he moved to the portal and ran back to town.
***

He slowed down as he saw adventurers, most of them looking like they had fought nothing.
“Did you close it?!” an elven mage shouted.
As he drew closer, the party started to recognize who he was, and Max winced at their faces.
“It’s over. Sorry, I made sure it was done. Tell the guards I’m going to go check the other breaks!”
With that, he took off, leaving them behind unable to handle the wide eyes and open mouths that had been his only reply.
***
“Two breaks cleared on your own,” Everett said, his voice not hiding the shock the man felt. “I still hadn’t revealed the gift the Queens sent two days ago, but now I won’t be able to keep it hidden any longer.”
He slid a piece of folded paper across the desk toward Max, resting his chin on both hands.
Reading it, Max winced.
“You can’t be serious? A gold statue?”
A smile appeared as Everett nodded.
“It will be tomorrow. News of what you did is already reaching my ears and I cannot tell you how long it has been since a single climber has done such a feat. I was going to hold off, but now the queens would not be happy to hear I kept it hidden.”
Groaning, Max slouched in his chair.
“Now all I have to do is wait for my party to return.”
Snorting, the older man rapped the desk with his knuckles.
“That makes all this even worse… you cleared two dungeon breaks *and* made it back before your group.”
***
Dozing, Max called out to his skill, knowing it had tried earlier and failed.
You are fortunate to have survived that encounter.
Max felt like he was drifting in a stream, facing upward in the night sky. Unlike so many other times, he couldn’t see his reflection.
Why are we like this?
For your safety.. You are not fully asleep and I dare not stay long. Someone is still searching and hunting you. Whatever had been promised or planned failed. A trap was being set in that dungeon.
Max tried to speak, but his voice didn’t work.
Listen, I must go quickly. Be careful. Whoever is searching for you has employed another world traveler. That one you faced is weaker here. In their realm… we would most likely lose. You dealt a blow and have either scared off the attacker or will make them risk even more. Just know, either way, it will have to happen sooner than later.
Max started to twist and shake. He felt himself moving and his eyes opened, seeing Tanila bent over, both hands on his shoulders as she straddled him.
“Seth? What’s wrong?!”
Shifting under her, Max blinked.
“What do you mean? I’m fine?”
“You were yelling… I couldn’t understand the words, but I could sense… something is wrong.”
Frowning, Max gently lifted her and set her next to him on the bed, sitting up himself.
“Someone is still trying to kill me. My skill says if they haven’t given up, it will happen soon.”
The white skin of Tanila somehow achieved a paler state as she covered her mouth.
“You can’t be serious… you think this was an attack on you?”
Telling her what he had faced, Max knew when she started biting her lip, he was right.
***

Two days of crafting allowed Max to help out the Faction while staying relaxed and safe from others.
It had been hard, but he played the role of a grateful adventurer when Max watched Everett and the Queen’s attendant uncover the golden statue of him that stood on top of the wall at the main gate. It looked like him. Bald head, holding a halberd, and yet it felt unreal. Like something that didn’t seem possible.
He had stared at it many times, ignoring the teasing that Fowl always seemed ready to give.
All Max could think of was the time he stood at the adventurers' guild in Windsor Wheel and how he had felt looking upon the statue of Seth Pendal.
Now another statue, and yet a different one, was around. One that looked like him and yet didn’t bear his name.
“You’re not paying attention again.”
Tanila’s voice brought him back to the weapon he was trying to engrave. The rune he was trying to etch was wrong, and he sighed, taking the whole blade and placing it in the coals, having to redo everything.
“Can’t handle being a hero and having your own statue?”
He groaned, accepting her gentle ribbing as it was the third time he had messed up because of how his mind wandered.
“You sure you don’t want to stop and do something else?”
Shaking his head, Max frowned.
“We could leave and risk being out around town, and I don’t want to put you in harm's way. For now, we need to make sure we’re ready for tomorrow. Our skills will be reset and we can go fight this boss. After that, we can decide what to do next. Besides, we’re all at max level already for these orange gems. The last few floors were really kind to us.”
Scoffing, Tanila held her book closed with her finger, marking her spot.
“Really kind to us… somehow I’m not sure that’s how I would describe it. Still, you are right. I’m still struggling with the knowledge that you upgraded your Death Magic ability to Rare. Not a skill one should have and yet you increased its power.”
Nodding, Max had finally checked that notification from the dungeon break. It appeared the lich he killed was stronger than the first, and that made him anxious to consider who could have brought forces like that together.
“Eleven more floors… that’s what we need. After that, we can relax.”
Scoffing, Tanila shook her head.
“You? Max Hoste? Relax? I don’t think you understand what that word really means.”
Wagging a finger at her, Max glanced at the blade that had a ways before it would be hot enough to begin the process all over again.
“If we weren’t in the forging area, I’d show you a few things.”
Putting her book away, Tanila leaned forward, holding her chin upward and smirking slightly.
“Big words from a small man…”
Unable to resist, he moved around the table, had her in his arms before she could react, and stopped with his lips an inch away from hers.
“Forgive me princess,” he said, winking at her before kissing her, ignoring the world and grateful for not just this moment but a woman who was content to make moments like this.

54 Chapter 272 - The 39th Floor

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Chapter 272 - The 39th Floor

“You don’t have to,” Max said as the two groups before them at the tower motioned for them to move ahead. “I mean, we can wait.”
The warrior before him laughed and shook her head.
“Seriously, we’re talking like a few minutes but you’ve earned the right to not have to wait. It would honor us all if you went ahead.”
Tanila’s hand pushed him slightly from behind and Max gave a slight bow to each of the members in both parties.
“I hope your head can fit through this portal,” Fowl announced, smiling as all those near them heard and began to chuckle.
“Ignore him. He’s just jealous,” Batrire declared, hiding her grin behind her hand.
Doing his best to ignore it all, Max nodded at the pair of guards and moved to the portal, touching it with his hand.
[Floor Thirty Nine]
[Enter]
The sound of water and the smell of salt air struck again before he could see what lay beyond.
Down a sharp sandy incline was an ocean and seven small pieces of land, maybe fifty yards wide, surrounded an island about five hundred yards wide.
The closest island, which was about a half mile away, had some stone section in the middle of it.
A dozen small rowboats were at the shoreline near them, waiting to be apparently used to get across the water.
“There is like a quarter mile between each of the small islands,” Cordellia said as she stood next to where Max was. “That’s a lot of rowing.”
Nodding, Max kept his eyes on the larger island. A few trees decorated it, some rocks on one side, yet it was surprisingly flat.
No vegetation appeared on the smaller ones that he could see.
“I don’t like the looks of this,” Fowl muttered. “Tell me I’m not the only one thinking that.. I mean, does it start when we get in the boats or we reach the island?”
“Does it matter?”
Scoffing, Fowl nodded and pointed at the boats and then the island.
“I’m not a genius, but if there are that many boats and only five of us, I’d assume we need more than one or two. Next, if that is the case, do we all aim for the first tiny island or the large one? If it starts on the tiny one, well that's less area to fight from. That then means we need to get to the bigger one.”
Clearing his throat as everyone watched him talk, Fowl scowled.
“And that means if it starts when we reach the little island, we’re going to be rowing for our lives from something that probably loves water. If we are able to get to the larger island before it does, then we at least can defend ourselves on land.”
“Someone’s been drinking intelligence potions,” Cordellia replied. “Fowl’s right though. I’d guess we need to take at least three boats, have Seth row one by himself and Fowl and I rowing the others. That way, if something happens, he could leave that boat and help whoever needs it. From there, we aim for the big island and drag the boats up onto land.”
With their plans made, everyone climbed into their boats, unsure what was about to happen.
***
Rowing went quickly as the strength each had and the lack of waves or current only required them to build up speed and maintain it.
Everyone was tense and Max could sense it as they passed the first small island. On the middle of the stone platform was a pedestal. It appeared empty, which Max thought was weird, but no one wanted to stop and see what might be in it.
Tensions rose as they got halfway between the small island and the larger one, nothing having yet appeared on the island.
With fifty yards left to go, bubbles began to pop up from the water and Max heard Fowl yelp.
“It’s underneath! Row!”

Everyone put their full strength into each time they used the paddles and, as the bubbles grew larger, they made it to shore, jumping out and grabbing their methods of transportation and pulling them up the sand and away from the water.
Another stone platform was in the middle of the island and there were seven pedestals in a circle around a larger one, but no one wanted to focus on that right now. Instead tentacles began to appear, sliding up along the shore and towards them, flopping around on the sand and appearing to search from them by touch.
“Go further inland!” Max yelled as he grabbed his boat, tugging it along. He had tried storing it along with the others before they boarded them, but none would enter it.
More and more of the thick, rubbery, suction covered bottom half, tentacle came from the edges till over a hundred feet were flopping around, knocking down trees.
“Those are thicker than a horse!”
Fowl was right, and Max knew cutting through one wasn’t going to be easy at all.
“We should be safe unless it climbs out of the water and toward us,” Max said, pointing at the platform. “Let’s see what we have here and figure out our next plan of attack.”
As they stood up there, each of them saw that the small pedestals each had two orbs inside it. Every pair was slightly different in color.
“A puzzle,” Tanila stated, tapping her chin. “Nothing in the large one, but maybe we have to have an orb in each of the small islands first?”
“You mean we have to cross the water? With that thing in it?” Fowl asked. “Surely you’re joking!”
Max shook his head and knew Tanila was right. For whatever reason, there was a puzzle.
“Let’s see how tough this thing is before we go out and try to do that,” Max said. “Cordellia, we can shoot it with our bows, and Tanila can use a spell.”
The three of them moved closer to where a pair of tentacles still searched around the island, and each of them unleashed an attack.
His arrow and Cordellia’s both sank into the creature and it reacted slightly, slamming its massive appendage in the direction they were standing.
Lighting came from Tanila’s hand and the rubbery flesh jerked for a moment before retreating slightly.
“Well that’s–”
A rock came flying from the water and Max grabbed Tanila and Cordellia, moving them safely from the hurled object as it rolled across the sand, crashing into a few trees and knocking them down.
“Goblin shite!” Cordellia cursed as she saw that the rock it had thrown was bigger than her. “It really didn’t like that spell.”
As she spoke, more bubbles began to form and a massive body appeared from under the water.
“It’s a mother loving Kraken!”
Max was surprised at their ranger's use of words, but there was no doubt she was right. Its angled head, those narrowed eyes and the number of tentacles that now started to rise up with it sent a quiver of fear through him. Black skin covered the outer part of it, while giant suction cups could be seen on the bottom part.
Seconds passed and soon it towered above the water, over seventy feet of its upper body showing. A dozen plus tentacles moved above the surface and Max had no doubt there were more underneath.
“Back up!
***
Everyone stared at the boss’s eyes. They changed colors as it moved. When it was near nothing, they were black as its skin. Times that it sank down closer to the water, they turned blue.
“I guess we need to try to see what happens if we take an orb to an island,” Fowl muttered. “Let me just say, not it!”
Max groaned, already knowing it would fall upon him to do this task.
“I’ll do it. You all stay here while I go to the furthest one.”

“What should we do?”
“Just watch it,” Max told their ranger. “See what it does, how it moves when I do. We can hopefully learn something about it.”
Standing in the circle of pedestals, Max found the one furthest away and seeing that it lined up with an island, took the orb from it and found out immediately it wouldn’t allow him to put it in dimensional storage.
Groaning, he took a pack and stuck it inside, tying it around his waist.
“Again?”
Nodding at Tanila, he pointed at the island he was headed to.
“Someone figure out how fast it is if it follows. I’m going to go all out.”
With that, he turned, gone from their presence and to the water in a moment.
Loud roars came as he touched the water, his arms and legs moving as if he was on land, racing across the top, sending water spraying on both sides.
Glancing behind him, Max saw that the Kraken was no longer on the other side of the island, and he raced toward his target.
Reaching the edge of the sand, he grabbed the pouch, yanking the gem free, and dropped it into the empty pedestal.
A light green glow appeared, matching the stone, and a solid beam of light raced across the water for a moment, striking the pedestal he had taken it from.
The sound of cannons rang out behind him and Max turned, seeing a ship, smaller than the boat they had been traveling on the other day, coming between the island he was on and the one to his left.
Two cannons were on the front of the ship and they had just fired upon the Kraken that was rising from the water between him and his friends.
It roared, both of the attacks, taking off flesh from the tentacle they struck as it protected its face.
Max could see the flesh began to grow back together quickly, taking only twenty seconds to replace that which had been lost.
Another salvo came and the ship managed to land a hit on the main body, making the Kraken dive under the water.
Not wanting to be this close to whatever was going to happen, Max ran to the side away from the ship, skimming across the surface of the water and back toward the island, watching to see what took place next.
Like those swordfish, the Kraken shot out of the water, its tentacles wrapping sound the ship. Wood cracked and shattered under its power. Even as the ship went down, both of the mounted cannons firing directly into the beast, it was quickly pulled under the water, vanishing almost as quickly as it had appeared.
Max arrived next to his party, who glanced back and forth at him and the Kraken that was chewing on something within the ship.
“Gods you are so fast!” Fowl exclaimed as Max turned and watched the unfolding scene.
“It's getting bigger,” Tanila muttered. “Look!”
Frowning, Max saw she was right. Whatever had been inside the ship made it stronger.
A crack of thunder came and dark clouds began to roll in as the last of the ship sank beneath the dark depths.
“I’m not sure that’s the best plan of attack,” Cordellia stated. “The damage it did wasn’t much and all it seems to be doing is making it stronger.”
The boss lowered itself under the water and vanished, not rising up as they scanned the island they were on.
Minutes passed, and it didn’t reappear, staying hidden from their sight.
“What are we going to do? We can’t wait it out.”
Fowl was right and everyone knew it. Something about this tower floor felt off, and Max couldn’t figure out what it was.
Sitting down on the ground, he pulled out a notebook and pulled out a piece of paper, scribbling onto the page.
Everyone gathered, reading the list he was making.

- *Twelve row boats*
- *Seven islands*
- *Crystal summons a ship each time?*
- *Boss gets stronger when summoned ship is destroyed*
- *Boss regenerates*
- *What are we missing?*

“That’s an accurate list of all this,” Batrire stated as she glanced at Tanila. “You’re the smarter one. What do you think we should do?”
Scoffing, their mage sat down next to Max and pulled out her own paper, drawing a map.
“I’m not sure, but we’re going to sit here for a bit and figure something out to try out.”
Fowl coughed and then moved a little bit away from everyone else. Suddenly a large table that had gone missing from the Faction house dining room appeared over his head, supported in both hands.
“Fowl Hammerfall, did you steal that?!”
“I borrowed it… as I felt the best group in our Faction might need a place to sit around one day. Seems I was right.”
Chuckling, Max stood and helped Tanila to her feet, watching as their dwarven warrior also had the missing chairs to the table as well.

55 Chapter 273 - Time to get Kraken

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Chapter 273 - Time to get Kraken

Max sprinted across the water, passing the first island and reaching the place where the other rowboats were.
Tanila and Cordellia had moved to the opposite end of the island, where the Kraken had vanished underneath the water. Their presence had summoned it and the spells and arrows from the pair kept it engaged as he made it back to the entrance of the boss floor.
Rowing back to the island was harder than he imagined as the paddles felt like they would snap from the speed and strength so he ended up returning to the start, stacking two boats on top of each other, and carrying them as he ran back to the island.
As he neared the outer ring, the beast started to rise, tentacles lashing out from the water, yet Max dodged and ran, smiling as the boss’s head appeared over the water and it let out a roar that he believed meant it was upset.
***
“That is completely not fair,” Fowl stated as he watched Max set the two new boats down by the other three. “Running on water? What are you? Some kind of god?”
Ignoring Fowl’s joke, Max pointed at the four of them, each now holding an orb from a pedestal in their hands.
“Are you certain you can keep its attention?” Tanila asked. “That’s a big ask.”
“I’m going to piss it off, don’t you worry. Cordellia already shared with me the good stuff.”
Their ranger grinned and nodded as Max pulled out a quiver and slung it over his shoulder.
“You only have fifty of those and they each cost three gold, so don’t waste them.”

“I’ll be fine. Between your lightning arrows and my arrows, I can cause it some pain. Now I’ll go and draw its attention. You four be safe. If the boss does leave me, I’ll be there to grab you in a moment.”
Everyone nodded once, putting their orb in a pouch and securing it on their hip.
Turning, Max took off, running toward the island he had summoned the first ship from.
“Twenty-seven seconds… You are pretty fast,” Max muttered as the boss started to come up from the water, surrounding his little island.
Tentacles stretched higher, easily a hundred feet or more and, like a clock, had him surrounded on all sides as the pair of eyes watched the man standing alone near the crystal pedestal.
Moving first, Max used one of the lightning arrows, sending it at the boss’s black eye, watching the beast turn and the arrow instead piercing the thick hide as it vanished inside its body.
It shrieked, tentacles coming as one at the island of sand, and Max moved as he unleashed two of his enchanted arrows that came from the bow.
[Demonic Teleportation]
The sound of all that mass striking the island was muffled and the sea was rolling when Max vanished from where it had struck, now on top of the water and skimming across the surface like a bug, sending arrows without pause at the boss’s back.
Each one seemed to have a different effect, some freezing, some burning, others bubbling and yet any damage done was quickly removed after about ten seconds.
He darted and weaved, avoiding the tentacle strikes as they slammed into and through the water, sending waves over ten and fifteen feet tall from the force.
He ran up to them, over them and appeared further away, always poking and prodding.
Time was his enemy. He couldn’t see his friends, but knew how long it should take for them to arrive at the small islands. Once that happened, he would have even less time to act.
A trio of attacks came close to hitting him as they boxed him in, yet an air wall gave him the ability to escape as he jumped onto it, leaping off it and onto one tentacle.
His halberd was out, and he ran, digging the axe head into the flesh and opening up a long furrow of damage, like a farmer tilling the soil.
Only a few seconds of running on the flesh took place before the boss jerked it underwater, but he cut a wound over fifty feet long in that time. Two black eyes glared at him. Max was almost certain it was wishing some sort of magic would fire from its eyes.
As it pulled its tentacles under the water, the boss began to turn and Max ran around, sending a few more arrows until he realized what the boss was doing.
A whirlpool was forming as water was being sucked toward the boss, building up speed and force. More and more water in the area began to come toward the underwater vortex.
It was a powerful attack, no doubt dangerous to anyone in the water, in a boat, or even the ship the boss had destroyed earlier, yet with his gift from the merfolk king, it was like running up a hill of sand. Sure, it continually flowed downward, but Max’s speed and strength was greater than the pull of the water.
An agonizing minute passed as the water continued to swirl and an occasional tentacle rose from underneath, always avoided as Max’s sonar gave him enough warning, resulting in him inflicting pain upon the boss.
Finally, the fireball appeared in the sky and Max allowed himself a grin, ready to see if Tanila’s plan would work out as he hoped.
“See you in a couple!”
[Haste]
Max wished he could have gotten some read on the boss’s reaction to when he vanished. The moment his skill kicked in, he was out of the whirlpool and headed toward the first island, seeing four ships all appearing upon the water at the same time.

He slowed down just enough to grab Cordellia, putting her on his shoulder as she yelled, not really prepared for his arrival and their departure. Each of the other three found the same fate, quickly collected and then dumped on the main island at the shore as Max raced toward the four ships.
“Be ready!”
Max reached the first ship, jumping off the water and onto the far left one, turning and watching for the boss. It wasn’t visible yet, but knowing how long it took to reach him and where he had left it, he had a few moments.
Quickly, he lashed a rope around the explosive barrel he had taken from the earlier tower floor, making sure it wasn’t going to fall off if the ship was turned sideways. Right at the main point of the single mast, it waited. A trap of Tanila’s design.
He jumped and took off, setting up the same thing on the next ship and then the third one. With those three set, Max ran around the fourth and farthest ship to the right, hoping Tanila was right.
His sonar went off about ten seconds later, telling him she had been correct.
It appears that even with the ships in the water, this thing REALLY hates me.
Tentacles erupted from where he had been moving along and Max laughed, lost in how fun the moment suddenly felt.
He jumped onto the ship, grinning as the cannons fired.
There all around it, the boss surrounded the ship, tentacles wrapping around it, wood creaking and snapping from the death grip the Kraken had on the vessel.
Max knew it wouldn’t hold much longer and moved to where the cannons were on the furthest side. With a quick tug, he pulled one free, cursing when it wouldn’t store as the other floor had and then jumped onto the water and ran at the closest ship which had turned, headed toward the boss.
Cannon balls flew from the three incoming ships while the one it was crushing only made the noise of wood being obliterated.
The sail was in the water, and sounds of crunching came as the boss ate whatever had to be inside the boat.
A quick glance revealed that again the boss was growing, ten or twenty more feet being added to its size.
Climbing aboard the closest ship, Max put the cannon he just ripped off next to the fire cask and watched.
Nothing happened like the other cannons had, no merging with the wood of the ship. Cursing he tossed it aside and grabbed one of the two from storage, setting it near the cask. This time it joined with the ship, glimmering for a moment and growing slightly in size.
That’s interesting…
Smiling, he dashed to the front of the boat, hacking off an opening in the front, and dropped the second cannon, watching as it did the same.
Pointing it at the boss, he pulled the rope and felt a more powerful explosion take place when a larger cannonball shot out from its opening and penetrated its skin. A second passed, then the attack exploded from within, sending out chunks of rubbery flesh and causing the boss to roar.
Immediately the Kraken moved faster toward him and Max yanked on the cannon, upset when it didn’t come free.
“Goblin shite!”
Yanking on the rope as quickly as he could, it fired again, just six seconds after the first one, striking once more and inflicting another gaping hole in the behemoth headed toward him.
Tentacles reached toward the vessel as the other two cannons fired on their own, striking the beast.
“Here we go,” Max said as he began summoning a fireball and sent it upward into the air.
As the thick appendages wrapped around the ship, causing it to shudder and shake, Max ran up to one, punching it with his bare hand and ignoring how slimy the thing felt when his skin pierced the thick outer skin.

[Weakness]
[Festering Touch]
[Demonic Magic]
Convulsions came from the spot his hand was, and the tentacle yanked itself away from the ship and from Max. It let go of its grip on the ship for a moment, flailing its black appendages everywhere.
Rain began to suddenly fall as thunder and lightning came from the clouds Max hadn't realized were quickly blowing in.
The ship! The first time it ate one the clouds had come!
Cursing, Max pulled his halberd out and began hacking at the boss when it finally started attacking once again.
Large chunks of flesh were sent into the water and onto the deck and when the boss pulled the ship up against its body, Max ran toward the furthest side, slashing at one more tentacle before jumping high into the air.
Turning, he summoned his bow and aimed at the barrel on the deck, watching as boards buckled and popped free, giving way to the power of the Kraken.
His arrow connected, igniting the barrel and when the liquid burst forth, flames spreading, some landed on the cannon next to it. Another second or two passed before it seemed to ignite and exploded, sending more of the liquid everywhere, igniting the ship, water and boss.
Landing on the water, Max ran to the island that was only a hundred yards away, standing on the shore near the boat they had left there and watched as the flames ravaged the boss.
The tentacles covered in the liquid went under the water, only to rise a few seconds later, still on fire, burning without care for either the sea or the rain.
Two orange glowing eyes, reflecting the fire underneath and around it, locked on Max as the ship sank, burning as it went down.
It didn't stop to try to eat whatever may or may not have been on the ship. He didn't know if it was burnt or destroyed from the explosion, but what he did know was that the boss never took those eyes off of him.
Firing a lighting arrow at the boss, Max watched as it struck, sending a wave of magic through its tentacle but this time, not healed as it had before.
Turning, Max ran for the third boat which was closing in, both front guns firing whenever it appeared they could.
***
"It's coming!"
Max stood on the shore with the others, watching the pile of burnt flesh make its way toward them. Only about four tentacles seemed to work, most of them now missing seventy-five percent of their mass.
Three times the boss had been foolish, chasing Max, ensnaring the ship, enduring a fire that wouldn't go out. All while being bombarded by the cannons, Max's bow and his halberd anytime the creature got close.
On the third ship he had recast the same spells, unsure how long they may or might not last.
Tanila had told him everything relied upon the Festering Touch and that the other two were just icing on the cake.
Fowl stood before the others, slightly in the water, shield out, hammer ready while Max and Cordellia had their bows pulled back.
Tanila had summoned a ball of lightning so large it felt like he was watching a wagon float above her head.
In the water, twenty yards away, was the last barrel. Floating in the water, barely bobbing amidst the broken pieces of a boat that the others had made look like trash.
The boss came, one eye gone, the other having liquid that streamed from both sides. Huge chunks of flesh were missing from its face and the scarred, burnt areas didn't regrow at all. Even the left side of the famous arrowed head was gone, leaving a jagged, torn area of flesh that made the boss look almost silly.

“Once it gets close, I’m getting out of the water!” Fowl shouted. “I don’t like being bait!”
As if drawn by a desire that it couldn’t avoid, the Kraken moved toward the dwarf, its movements jerky and not as smooth as it had been at the start of this fight.
“Fifty more yards!” Max announced. “Be ready, bait!”
“ *I’ll bait your arse with my foot.* ”
Sonar picked up the dwarf’s curse and Max grinned, ready to end this.
The rain was nothing more than a light sprinkle, and even the dark clouds couldn’t dampen what was about to happen.
“Now!”
Fowl began back peddling, getting out of the way as Tanila unleashed her spell at the boss.
Cordellia’s special arrow flew, empowered and enchanted with lightning, streaking toward the remaining eye of the beast.
Max ignored the boss, his arrow hitting the barrel, sending out a splash of liquid flames that covered the bottom half of the boss as it moved toward them.
The Kraken flailed, rolling in the shallow waters, flames covering its corpse as it burned. Loud, ear piercing shrieks and roars came until they halted and the mountain of flesh no longer moved.
[Consume has Consumed Bonus Stats]
[20 Strength Consumed]
[20 Dexterity Consumed]
[20 Constitution Consumed]
[Consume has Consumed a skill]
[Current Skill is Equal in Rank]
[Power Stored for Future Use]
The influx of stats surprised Max, as he wasn’t sure how the system decided his attack had been the one to kill it.
Apparently the fire was what did it in...
No one said a word until the fire went out and the hulking, burnt corpse of the Kraken vanished into nothing.
“Holy dwarf nuts!” Cordellia exclaimed suddenly. “I’m almost level seventy!”

56 Chapter 274 - The Need for Bread

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Chapter 274 - The Need for Bread

Everyone turned and saw their ranger standing there, hand held over her mouth and her eyes wide like saucers.
“How close?” Tanila asked.
“Like sixty-nine point nine percent!”
“Bah! I’m only level sixty nine!” Fowl stated as he frowned.
“Only…” Batrire replied.
“Well, congrats to us all,” Max said as he turned and glanced around the island.
Where the pedestals had been was a large black chest, matching the color of the Kraken’s skin, larger than any they had received in a while.
“Since I got the kill, I’m going to go ahead and check out what’s inside.”
Max waited till Fowl’s mouth was open in reply and then ran, leaving his short-legged friend and the others behind, standing near the chest in just a few seconds.
Grinning, he watched as the others started jogging, turning to study the chest.
It was a raid size one, and the outside had a relief of the Kraken, tentacles stretching around the front and side of it.

Running his fingers along the relief, Max turned as he sensed the others coming close, all of them laughing as Fowl cursed.
“That’s not funny!”
Ignoring Fowl’s outburst, Max gave the lid a gentle push and it flew open.
“I’m just kidding. You can look inside first. Here me help.”
A stool appeared in Max’s hand, and Fowl held up his middle finger while everyone else erupted in laughter.
Tears streamed down Tanila's and Batrire’s cheeks as they laughed for easily twenty seconds.
“Fine! But don’t think I’m going to forget this one,” Fowl exclaimed as he hopped onto the stool and peered into the chest.
Everyone took a few breaths, trying to recover as Fowl stood on the stool, not saying a word. His face had changed and his eyebrow was raised on one side.
“Something wrong?” their healer asked.
“I’m not sure what kind of potions those are.”
Everyone moved immediately, looking in to see what he was talking about.
“Huh… I’ve never seen one like that before, either,” Tanila stated. “I mean… I haven’t even read about a potion that color.”
Max reached in and pulled the one that was for him out. Each of them had a cream colored white potion and staring at it wasn’t going to do any good.
Studying it, he wondered if his Alchemy skill might help and after a few seconds itreacted.
[Inspect Potion]
*****
Bojundayra’s Stat Potion
Gives a random amount of stat points to each stat.
Epic Quality
*****
“Well holy ogre shite… it’s a fricking stat potion,” Max informed them. “A random amount of points is given to every stat. Epic Quality.”
Fowl had his hand in the chest, yanking the glass stopper at the top of the potion and guzzled down the creamy substance like the drinking champ he was.
Smacking his lips, he wiped them with the back of his hand and then started to shake.
Everyone moved close, ready to help him before Fowl began to laugh and shook his head.
“I’m just screwing with you. I’m fine. Anyway, it tastes like arse and I’m still waiting on… HOLY MOTHER OF ALL ELF TITS!”
He began to choke as his eye bulged and he shook his head, rubbing his eyes, blinking a few times and staring at the same spot in the air.
“What is it, you idiot?!”
Turning his attention toward Batrire, Fowl shook his head slowly.
“Twenty seven strength, fifteen dexterity, forty-two constitution, eleven intelligence and fifteen wisdom… that amount of points is…”
He never finished his words, still standing on the stool with his mouth open.
The other three retrieved their potions from the chest and all mimicked Fowl’s mannerism, each of them wincing at the taste.
Eyes went wide and mouths looked prepared to hit the dirt as the trio got to read what they were just given.
“Someday I’m going to kiss whatever god loves us,” Cordellia muttered. “It would take over twenty levels to get this many stat points!”
The four of them nodded and Max smiled, poking Fowl, who still stood on the stool.
His dwarven friend turned and saw the potion he was being offered, and his lip trembled.
“I… I can’t,” Fowl said, his voice quivering as he spoke. “I already owe you ten children named after you.”
Batrire scoffed and rolled her eyes.

“Take it,” Max said, shaking it and pushing it closer. “You’re my friend and you’ll need the extra constitution if you’re going to have ten children.”
Chuckling, Fowl eyed the potion, yet hadn’t reached out for it yet.
“What… what if it fails? Like the other stat potions? Isn’t there a six months or a year cooldown between taking them?”
Frowning that Fowl remembered such a detail, and he hadn’t, Max shrugged.
“Try a sip. See if any notification comes up. If not, take a swig.”
Cordellia coughed and Max glanced past Fowl and saw her eyebrows narrowed at him.
“Why are you giving that away? It’s twenty levels or more of stat points! Surely even you can use them.”
Wincing, Max heard Tanila’s faint giggle and rubbed his face with his empty hand.
“So… my black skill does more than just take skills…” Max said, watching as their ranger took a step back and her face began to change. Those narrowed eyebrows began to stretch untill they were as far apart as possible.
“You can get stats too?!”
Bobbing his head, Max shook the potion gently.
“I don’t need this and since Fowl is the other tank, keeping him alive is always important.”
“But… surely you could use that many stats! I mean…”
It took Cordellia a moment to finally admit to herself what she had wondered all along. The speed at which Max moved, the power in his attacks, and how much magical power and mana he seemed to have.
“How… How high are your stats?”
“Cordellia–”
Max shook his head, stopping Tanila, who was about to chastise the elf for asking such a question.
“You’re part of our family and you used the tablet, so I won’t hide it.
“Every stat but Intelligence and Wisdom are over three hundred and those two–”
He stopped talking, catching Cordellia as she passed out.
***
“I’m fine… really I am,” she said, relaxing on the chair and twisting the cup of water that sat on the table Fowl had set up again. “It’s… it’s a lot to take in. So much suddenly clicked and I guess my brain couldn’t take it all.”
She looked at Max, who sat across the table from her and was softly smiling.
“You could walk through the capital and slaughter everyone with stats like that and knowing that, combined with your skills and how you were about to give away a potion like that… you really are different… I mean, I knew you were… but…”
Taking a drink, Cordellia glanced at the others, who were all relaxing as well.
The rain had stopped and the dark clouds were gone. A gentle breeze blew across the island and for a moment, the memory of the boss they had just faced was only present because of the big chest still waiting to be emptied.
“Thank you.”
“For what?”
Max’s smile grew as he leaned against the table.
“Your kind words, Cordellia. I don’t want to be that guy who would do such a thing. Once more I’ll remind you, everything I do is for us. One day I hope to never have to fear any of you getting hurt.”
She smiled and then took a deep breath and let it out.
“So will Fowl accept your gift? Because if not–”
“Too late!” Fowl exclaimed. “I already drank it while you were passed out!”
Max chuckled, stood up, tapped the table with his fingers and moved toward the chest.
“It’s been long enough. Let’s get out of here and head home.”
As the others rose, waiting for Fowl to store all the furniture, Max took the last orange crystal and put it away.

He wished there had been items, but the stat gains had been a blessing for everyone, doubly better for Fowl who was being transformed into a powerhouse rather quickly.
***
“A Kraken, Everett… Can you imagine that?”
“I can’t imagine how one defeats that thing normally. I’m still impressed that you all managed to use those barrels like that. It’s a shame we don’t have more of them.”
“Maybe we could make something like them down the road,” Max replied. “I mean, how hard could that be?”
Both of the older men groaned and shook their heads.
“Explosives are possible, but at that scale it's the volatility. Even a small potion is dangerous to make. When you try to create a batch that large, one would be at risk of one thing going wrong and then…”
Tom stopped talking when he saw how his friend shifted on the couch next to him.
“Regardless. You’re about to start the fortieth floor! I can’t believe it's only been a couple months since you all joined and you are this far!”
Cordellia raised her hand and Tom gave her a puzzled look.
“Can I just say thank you again to the both of you for choosing me to join this party? I’d never have imagined being where I am today… this party… this family…” Tears formed as the ranger received a gentle squeeze from Batrire, who sat next to her on the couch. “They don’t see someone new, they treat me like I’ve always been one of them, and…” sniffing, she wiped a few tears and then took a deep breath. “No one lets Fowl make fun of my voice anymore.”
Laughter came from them all, resetting the mood from one that threatened to turn misty in a moment.
“I understand,” Everett said as he leaned forward. “Our Faction is better because of you five and we are grateful for that. Just know we are a family and as such, I’ll do anything I can to help.”
Stretching, Max yawned and ignored the chuckles that came from the others.
“Honestly, all I want right now is a nap… I feel like I’ve been sprinting this past year and I, for one, am excited to slow down for a moment and just relax.”
Tom jumped up and pointed at the door.
“Then go rest! You’ve earned it! Tomorrow I won’t even force you to train.”
Everyone stood up, grinning at that joke.
***
Max rolled over and gave Tanila a kiss on her bare shoulder.
The late nap had turned into a full on coma where they both slept all night. Each of them had been worn out and the knowledge they had completed something huge and were stronger allowed the walls of exhaustion to vanish.
“Morning, my love,” he whispered before kissing her again.
She groaned and rolled over, red hair spilling everywhere.
“Do we have to get up?”
“No, you can stay here, but I’m going to sneak out and visit that bakery I like. Today I feel like I might buy out their entire store.”
Groaning, Tanila gave him a gentle poke with her finger and then rolled back over.
“You know what I like,” she said, yawning after that. “Bring me a few to keep in storage.”
Kissing her shoulder once more, Max got out of bed and was dressed, being quiet as he let her sleep.
***
The sun was out and even with the dark clouds further away in the sky, warning about the coming rains in the next month, Max didn’t care.
Life was good and their family was getting to the place they needed to be.
Carts rolled by and people were shouting, already trying to entice shoppers.
The smell of food, drink and crafted goods hung in the air as he strolled down the street, smiling and waving at everyone he passed.
Running his hands through the mop of black hair, Max couldn’t help but wonder what hair would be like.

Having to fix it every day? Man, that seems like such a bother...
A pack of kids were yelling, having fun on the weekend in, tossing back names and insults as they darted between adults.
The idea of children hit him. That would be great one day, if it was even possible. So much would depend upon –
Max's sonar exploded with a warning and faster than a blink of an eye, he was in full armor, shield and weapon out.
The shape came, hitting him even though it wasn't there and Max knew it was the same one from outside that perfume shop.
As he attempted to react, to strike back, he felt himself being pushed by the attacker, and then everything shifted.
Slashing his weapon, Max found nothing but air.
His attacker had been there for a brief second and then was gone.
As his eyes adjusted, it didn't matter. His sonar skill told him everything he needed to know.
He was currently trapped in a room of stone, and there were no doors or light.

56-1 BOOK 5 - (Finished - Few notes) Don't forget 10/30 It stubs! https://www.royalroad.com/fiction/76259/ultimate-level-1-litrpg-book-5-stubs-1030/chapter/1869384/book-5-finished-few-notes-dont-forget-1030-it 2024-10-28

WOW - All I can say is my patron's were like 'ahhhhh' when that last chapter hit.

Good news is 11/4 book 6 starts (and its completely uploaded on Royal Road!!))

Strap in, grab your popcorn and drinks and prepare for a different kind of ride as that adventure takes place!

For everyone who is still reading this story, it means the world to me! I wouldn't be able to do for my family what I can without you!

This journey has been an incredible ride! With over 40k+ works into book 7, I'm loving the story and can't wait to finish all 9 books!

Thank you again! Enjoy your weekend!

A NOTE FROM DADS BEDTIME STORIES

So a few quick reminders.

Read Fast --- Because Amazon requires I take it down before Amazon launch.

Like Audiobooks? Good news is book 3 hits 10/29 on Amazon! (Even better news? - All 6 finished books are turned in. I'm just waiting on release of them)

Up for helping a little more? I'll post when book 5 is live on Amazon. If you enjoyed the story, a solid advanced review on launch day helps keep me do better on their algorithm.

Want to jump ahead to book 6? 5 chapters have already dropped on my Patreon - Check it out if you want!

*****

Last bit of news - I got 54k of a new story I'm slowly working on building. Writing a time loop. Not sure when it will drop but just a little heads up on the knowledge of it!